Ars biographica poetica: Coleridgean Imagination and the Practical Value of Contemplation

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Ars biographica poetica:

Coleridgean Imagination and the Practical Value of Contemplation

Submitted by Peter Robert Cheyne

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This work is dedicated
with love and prayers for my wife,
Sachie Francesca, and our children,
Maria Matsumi, Angus Keita, and
Martha Taylor.

Peter Cheyne, Ars biographica poetica: Coleridgean Imagination and the Practical Value of Contemplation

This thesis begins by examining how Coleridge Romanticizes Platonism. I argue that Coleridge creatively recasts Plato's Divided Line analogy, and thereby finds a higher role for a radically re-thought imagination. Through this recast imagination, Coleridge develops a Romantic Platonism by elevating imagination and modifying Plato's linear scheme into a polarity that harmonizes sense and reason.

I argue that Coleridge's philosophy develops in response to the Empiricist philosophy that dominated the British practice, and transcendental idealism that flourished in Germany. I argue that Coleridge's philosophy is neither Empiricist, nor a mere translation of German idealism, as critics have sometimes suggested, but that it is quintessentially Platonic. Unlike Plato, however, Coleridge elevates the status of imagination, separating it from fantasy (or fancy, as he calls it), which retains the subordinate position it has for Plato. Attacking Empiricist philosophy, Coleridge argues that reason and its Ideas (and not the understanding) constitute and indeed exceed the apex of human thought, a distinction corresponding to Plato's between *noesis* and *dianoia*.

I present a view, developing from Coleridge and answering Plato, of how the practical and the contemplative lives can bring each other nearer to fulfilment, such that, to use Plato's terms, contemplation can be perfected in the return to the cave, rather than be prevented there, as is often feared. I examine how Coleridgean imagination and reason operate as the higher, 'spiritual mind', balancing the lower 'mind of the body'. While the lower mind desires and consumes, with fancy restlessly moving through ever-shifting mental images, the higher mind yearns, and contemplates, finding stillness in beholding value.

I propose what I call the contemplative *ars biographica poetica*, suggesting not only that we should live our lives as the poetic art of life-writing, but also that we already do so. Usually we shape our lives unawares of any poetic task, yet we manage nevertheless to retrieve moments of strikingly beautiful meaning despite decades-long disasters prolonged by deliberate blindness and a pathological obstinacy that values mere repetition above reason. This art at its best, however, relates to philosophy as the former seeks in the latter a satiating vision, a wisdom to answer profoundest yearning.

Preface

This dissertation was completed part-time, registered at Durham University, while living and working in Japan. It develops from my MPhil thesis, *Mood and Self in Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Sartre*,[1] which proposes a unitary existentialist conception of mood as disclosing value and transcendence in our lives. The present work extends the theme of contemplation as appreciative beholding, and progresses to consider the objectivity of the value disclosed.

After completing my MPhil at the University of Kent at Canterbury, under Sean Sayers' supervision, I moved to Japan and married my college sweetheart, Takako, who had a few years earlier returned to Japan after finishing her psychoanalytic studies, also at Kent. Working at Fukuoka University, I kept my enthusiasm for teaching English as a Second Language by using English poetry, and themes and stories from Philosophy, especially from Plato. I hoped to continue my philosophical research, and my MPhil suggested further research into what Coleridge calls the union of deep feeling with profound thought (*Biographia* I, 80).

I was only dimly aware, through reading Warnock's Introduction to Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, of Coleridge's forward-reaching connections to phenomenology, or even those returning to Platonism through Neo-Platonism. Coleridge for me meant a few remembered quotations, and an air of mystery about the 'Kubla Khan' poem in a copy of *The Readers' Digest Book of Strange Stories, Amazing Facts: Stories That Are Bizarre, Unusual, Odd, Astonishing, Incredible - But True* left to me by my grandfather, Vivien Smith, who died young. The story in that strange, heavy, dark-red, musty, clothbound, hardback book that so captured my seven-or-eight-year-old imagination retold the mystery of 'Kubla Khan' as a vision in a dream that was left apparently unfinished because its composition was interrupted by 'a person on business from Porlock'.

In Fukuoka, with first child, Maria, on her way, I wished to strengthen my academic credentials to get a teaching position elsewhere in Japan before my eight-year limited contract at Fukuoka University expired. I hoped to develop my interests in Ideas in the Arts, and I believed that specializing in the German, French, or Danish philosophers of my MPhil thesis suited future job-hunting less well than researching a great literary and philosophical artist and thinker famous for masterly compositions in the English language. This answers the question 'Why Coleridge?', who is overlooked by today's philosophers, despite his bright flashes of philosophical insight arising from and developed by long and deeply-mulling powers of discernment. When put this way, one might see why Coleridge, above all other philosophical artists,[2] could help centre my interests in the problems that also attract Plato, Plotinus, and Proclus; the English Platonists and Renaissance poet-philosophers, especially Shakespeare; and Kant, Schelling, Schiller, et al, all of whom being the same authors informing Coleridge's researches.

I enrolled part-time at Durham University in early 2003, agreeing with my supervisor, David Cooper, to spend my long vacations at Durham. Over several supervisions we discussed the shape of a thesis on the meaning of life informed by

[1] Submitted to the University of Kent Philosophy Department in 2002.
[2] T. S. Eliot, for example, whose PhD thesis on Bradley's profound ethics and ontology, and his influential poetry and criticism, would have allowed a study of Ideas in the Arts, but would not have satisfied my desire for a philosophy of contemplation.

Coleridgean concerns. Very soon, however, a profound concern with the meaning of life struck my young family.

After Maria Matsumi was born, my thirty-two-year-old wife, Takako, was diagnosed with Stage IV stomach cancer, receiving a six-months terminal prognosis from Fukuoka University Hospital oncologists. Their prognosis was accurate. Takako never complained of her condition. Intense pain repeatedly came and passed, but her gentleness always remained. She stayed mostly at home, not hospital, and I remain deeply grateful to John Hatcher and Yukiko Ōshima of Fukuoka University English Department for arranging six months paid compassionate leave so I could look after my wife in our final months together. We were still in the honeymoon of our short marriage, and Takako was always thankful for her share of life.

Being a single father to a toddler and teaching nine periods a week at Fukuoka University, plus up to three weekly sessions at Kyushu University, meant postponing my studies. By 2009, David Cooper had retired from teaching at Durham, and he recommended that Andy Hamilton supervise my resurrected thesis. Andy's understanding of the fine line between philosophy and intellectual history has been very valuable. Andy has helped most with his deep thinking into philosophical aesthetics and his continued calls to rewrite with a feel for style as well as clarity so that the philosophical critic never forget that he or she too, and not just the artists and philosophers one writes about, is engaged in an art, and not a business.

Hamilton's aim therefore converges with Coleridge's, insofar as both agree that all technique and creative effort be used ultimately for humane cultivation. Very generous with his time, and well beyond the call of duty, Andy twice visited me in Japan. First in rural Miyazaki, then in central Kyoto, we spent several weeks and many cups of tea discussing the importance of style in philosophy. Where this thesis is stylistically deficient, it is certainly not for want of my supervisor's efforts.

In 2012 I remarried, and without my wife Sachie's support I might not have finished this thesis. For all the current work's faults, in Sachie's presence I found the steady guide of renewed purpose that I have tried to maintain throughout the final writing stages. We have a second child, Angus Keita, who scurries to my notebook computer to help edit the final pages. He and Maria are joined by a sister, whose happy delivery comes a few weeks before this thesis will be respectfully submitted to the University of Durham Humanities Faculty prior to its examination by philosophers Michael McGhee and David M. Knight.

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I thank the British Library for permission to reproduce Coleridge's autograph sketch of his System of the Mental Powers in Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie* (see Appendix A).

For encouragement, advice, and valuable comments I thankfully and humbly acknowledge my debts to the generosity of Coleridge scholars Jim Mays, Raimonda Modiano, Luke Wright, Alan Gregory, Anya Taylor, Douglas Hedley, David Vallins, and Kelvin Everest; scholar of literature, philosophy, and religious studies Joseph S. O'Leary; philosophers David Cooper, Andy Hamilton, and Simon James; and scholars of classical and later Hellenistic philosophy Phillip Horky, and Michael Chase.

Peter Cheyne
Kyoto, Japan
20th January, 2014

Contents

Abbreviations

Coleridge

The Bollingen Foundation sponsored *Collected Works* and *Notebooks* are published by Routledge in London and elsewhere, and Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. Oxford's Clarendon Press publishes the *Collected Letters.*

Reflection	*Aids to Reflection,* ed. John Beer, *CC* 9, 1993.
Biographia	*Biographia Literaria, or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions,* eds James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols, *CC* 7, 1983.
CC	*The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* general ed. Kathleen Coburn, 1969-2002, (Bollingen Series LXXV).
Letters	*Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* ed. E. L. Griggs, 6 vols, Oxford, 1956-1971.
Notebooks	*The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* Vols I-III (each in 2 parts) ed. Kathleen Coburn, 1957-1973; Vol. IV (in 2 parts) eds Kathleen Coburn and Merton Christensen, 1990; Vol. V (in 2 parts) eds Kathleen Coburn and Anthony Harding, 2002, (Bollingen Series L).
Constitution	*On the Constitution of Church and State According to the Idea of Each,* ed. John Colmer, *CC* 10, 1976.
Friend	*The Friend,* ed. Barbara E. Rooke, 2 vols, *CC* 4, 1969.
Logic	*Logic*, ed. J. R. de J. Jackson, *CC* 13, 1981.
Lit. Lects	*Lectures 1808-1819: On Literature*, ed. R. A. Foukes, 2 vols, *CC* 5, 1987.
Lay Sermons	*Lay Sermons,* ed. R. J. White, *CC* 6, 1972.
Marginalia	*Marginalia,* vols I & II, ed. George Whalley, 1980-1984; Vols III-VI eds H. J. Jackson and George Whalley, 6 vols, *CC* 12, 1992-2001.
Opus Maximum	*Opus Maximum,* ed. Thomas McFarland, *CC* 15, 2002.
Phil. Lects	*Lectures 1818-19: On the History of Philosophy*, ed. J. R. de J. Jackson, 2 vols, *CC* 8, 2000.
Pol. Lects	*Political Lectures, 1795, of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
Poetical Works I	*Poetical Works Part One: Poems (Reading Text),* ed. J. C. C. Mays, 2 vols, *CC* 16, 2001.
Poetical Works II	*Poetical Works Part Two: Poems (Variorum Text*), ed. J. C. C. Mays, 2 vols, *CC* 16, 2001.

Sibylline Leaves *Sibylline Leaves*, Oxford and New York: Woodstock Books, [1817] 1990.

Statesman's Manual *The Statesman's Manual* [1816], in *Lay Sermons*, ed. R. J. White, *CC* 6, 1972.

SWF *Shorter Works and Fragments*, eds H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson, 2 vols, *CC* 11, 1995.

Table Talk *Table Talk*, ed. Carl Woodring, 2 vols, *CC* 14, 1990.

Kant

Kant's section numbers are usually given for convenience, as these are the same over different editions unless otherwise indicated.

CJ *The Critique of Judgment*

CPR *The Critique of Pure Reason*

CPrR *The Critique of Practical Reason*

Plato

All quotations from the *Republic* are from Chris Emlyn-Jones's and William Preddy's translation in their Loeb Classical Library edition. Quotations from other works are from *Complete Works*, 1997 (see Bibliography below).

Republic *Republic*, Bks 1-5, Plato V, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Republic *Republic*, Bks 6-10, Plato VI, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Plotinus

All quotations from A. H. Armstrong's translation, London: Heinemann / Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library Series.

Ennead I Plotinus I, *Ennead* I, 1-9. Including Porphyry's *On The Life of Plotinus and the Order of his Books*, Loeb Series (440), 1966.

Ennead II Plotinus II, *Ennead* II, 1-9. Loeb Series (441), 1966.

Ennead III Plotinus III, *Ennead* III, 1-9. Loeb Series (442), 1967.

Ennead IV Plotinus IV, *Ennead* IV, 1-9. Loeb Series (443), 1984.

Ennead V Plotinus V, *Ennead* V, 1-9. Loeb Series (444), 1984.

Ennead VI Plotinus VI, *Ennead* VI, 1-5. Loeb Series (445), 1988.
Plotinus VII, *Ennead* VI, 6-9. Loeb Series (468), 1988.

Introduction

This thesis reads the works of S. T. Coleridge (1772-1834) as a hub for thoughts on contemplation and imagination in the Platonic tradition and a broader, perennial philosophy including Eastern wisdom traditions. I understand perennial philosophy, East and West, as a concern with powers of thought and concentration not for their own sake, but because of the necessity of careful thought to rest on what thought seeks, namely value and its source. Thus Western philosophies focus on, e.g., perception, feeling, belief, opinion, understanding, charity, contemplation, and wisdom, and Eastern philosophies focus on, e.g., non-thinking, attention, concentration, compassion, insight, and wisdom.

My thesis therefore pursues Coleridge's philosophical quest by sharing the same ends. Those ends I take to be the Ideas pursuable by what he calls the energies of reason (*Statesman's Manual*, 29), which in the human mind become attention, reflection, concentration, discernment, and insight, which are real powers and of central interest to philosophers East and West for millennia because of their relation to wisdom. These energies of reason require a mentally strenuous pursuit. Their objects are so nearly alike to their methods, that losing track of the one means temporarily losing the other. As Coleridge describes intellectual effort:

> in the philosophy of ideas our words can have no meaning, for him that uses and for him that hears them, except as far as the mind's eye in both is kept fixed on the idea . . . . If the ray of mental vision decline but an hair's breadth on this side or on that, it is instantly strangled in darkness (*Opus Maximum*, 226)

Underpinned by inquiry into the intellectual energies of reason, this thesis also examines how Coleridge develops a philosophic system in response to two traditions: the Empiricist philosophy that in his day dominated the British practice, and transcendental idealism that flourished in Germany. I argue that Coleridge's philosophy is neither Empiricist nor a mere translation of German idealism, as critics sometimes suggest, but that it is quintessentially Platonic. Unlike Plato, however, Coleridge elevates the imagination's status, separating it from fantasy (or fancy, as he calls it), which retains the subordinate position given to it by Plato. Attacking Empiricist philosophy, Coleridge argues that reason and its Ideas (and not the understanding) constitute and indeed exceed the apex of human thought, a distinction that corresponds to Plato's between *noesis* and *dianoia*.

Considering Coleridge's theory of the mental powers, this thesis explores imagination's preparatory role in leading to contemplation. Imagination gives aesthetic

access to Ideas, and thus allows Ideas to have meaning in our lives. Ordinarily, people slowly become only dimly aware of the Ideas that profoundly influence their lives, and this via art, religion, laws, and other such intellectual products. I argue throughout this thesis that Ideas must be consciously approached with attention, concentration, and imagination if we are to be responsibly in charge of our lives and not doomed to repeat the same mangled and obscurely felt patterns year after year, generation after generation. I argue for noetic enlightenment, and for guidance by people in this state. Thus I require, with Plato, that the philosopher return to the cave, and, in Zen Buddhist terms, that those who attain *satori* descend the mountain, metaphorically speaking, to share their enlightenment.

A main argument of this thesis is that if society is to improve, the philosophical teacher, politician, or generally engaged citizen must strive to unite contemplative and practical life through aesthetic engagement in the classroom, workplace, and wider society. With this argument, I echo Coleridge's call for a decisively vocational clerisy (clergy, scholars, and teachers), which influential and practical notion Knight (2004, 154) glosses as follows:

> In medieval times, the clergy were the educated class – a clerisy – with a duty to pass on learning and provide leadership; now, Coleridge urged, those same duties belonged to the educated, who should see themselves as a clerisy. Ordained ministers would only be a part of this clerisy . . . in a new, liberal, and comprehensive vision of a national church. Coleridge's views resonated down the century.

Before shaping society, however, one must be shaped oneself. This is why Plato argues that philosophical study proper, which includes dialectic – dangerous in young and untrained minds (*Republic*, 539d) – not commence until age thirty; social offices not be held until thirty-five; and that social leadership not be undertaken until age fifty. And at fifty, Plato's discalced elite would still be in training, alternating periods of socially beneficial work with contemplative philosophy. Then they must be:

> made to raise the radiance of their soul and look at that which brings light to all. And when they have seen the Good itself, using that as their model [*paradeigma*] they must each in turn put the state and its inhabitants and themselves in order, spending the majority of their time on philosophy, but when their turn comes, they must each labour at their civic duties, govern in the interests of the state, and carry out their work not as something fine, but as something essential. They must constantly educate others to be like them and leave the guardians for the state and then go off and dwell in the Islands of the Blessed. (540a-b).

My thesis, *Ars biographica poetica*, proposes that in order to lead well by both design and by example, we should first form our lives in the poetic art of life-writing. I

also propose that we already do this, but almost always without due reflection. I thus repeat Socrates's call to the examined life, adding that the examination must be poetic as well as logical. Usually we shape our lives unawares of any poetic task, yet we manage nevertheless to redeem moments of strikingly beautiful meaning despite decades-long disasters prolonged by deliberate blindness and a pathological obstinacy that makes do with mere repetition above reason. Life's art at its best, however, relates to perennial philosophy as those who aim to live well seek, century after century, a satiating vision, a wisdom to answer profoundest yearning.

Moreover, and so long as one can be brought to understand one's current ignorance, even the suggestion that genuine wisdom is possible can decelerate the unsatisfying cycles of repetition generated by falsely assuming that the answer to human yearning lies in social climbing, material acquisition, and the diversions of sensuous pleasure. The descriptive part of my title is: Coleridgean Imagination and the Practical Value of Contemplation. Nowadays, the word *practical* describes being hands-on, in a down-to-earth way, such as someone being good at banking, carpentry, etc. This is not the sense meant here. However, I am using a sense related to that.

The New Testament story of Martha wanting to serve Christ food and drink, to run a bath, and so on, is traditionally understood as illustrating the practical life (Luke, 10:38-42). It is valuable, but lesser, according to this contemplative tradition, than her sister Mary's choice, which was to sit near Jesus and listen. My thesis holds that contemplative life is the better part, but I also emphasize that each brings the other nearer to fulfilment, such that, in Platonic terms, contemplation can be perfected in the cave, rather than be prevented there, as is often feared.

Besides an important general intellectual influence, I also argue for Coleridge a place in the canon of English-speaking philosophy.[3] Although Coleridge studies are flourishing in English departments around the world, a nineteenth-century British philosopher allowed to peruse almost any twentieth or early twenty-first century philosophy textbook might wish to inquire into The Curious Case of the Disappearing Coleridge. Mill (1840), for example, sees him as equalled only by Jeremy Bentham in the English-speaking philosophy of his day. For Mill, these two great minds shape nineteenth-century British thought in opposite though complementary directions.

[3] As do Mill, 1840; Muirhead, 1930; Barfield, 1971; and Skorupski, 1993.

Moving beyond Mill's high philosophical and cultural esteem for Coleridge, it is easy to survey the explicit history of Coleridge's much-documented influence on the minds of his age and those of the following (Skorupski, 1993; Parker, 2000; eds Vigus and Wright, 2008; and Shaffer, in ed. Burwick, 2003, 696 ff.). He introduces Kant to a wide British audience; [4] is an early Anti-reductionist, becoming an eloquent and persuasive opponent of Empiricist zeal (Gregory, 2003, 1; passim). He meets Emerson who visits him in a bereavement-induced spiritual quest to Europe in 1832, and who then exports Coleridge's Romantic philosophy across the Atlantic to initiate American Transcendentalism with his 1836 essay, *Nature*.[5] In Anglican church history he is a leading inspiration of the Broad Church movement, greatly influencing socialist Maurice, Liberal Gladstone, and conservative Catholic Cardinal Newman, and thus Coleridge also influences the Oxford Movement (cf. Wright, 2010). He is widely acknowledged as the preeminent modern literary critic (Read, 1949, 18; Watson, 1962, 111-30),[6] and in the first sentence of *The Sacred Wood* (1921, 1), Eliot asserts that:

> Coleridge was the greatest of English critics, and in a sense the last.

Appreciation of Coleridge as a philosopher within Philosophy departments has diminished throughout the Analytic-style, Anglo-American, linguistic era. In Literature departments, his reputation as a philosopher has fared better, albeit with warnings to students not to emulate his Catherine-wheel-like brilliance. That is, the brilliance of his thought is admired, but his stacks of unfinished, though seminal, projects are used to frighten young postgraduates. Thus Hamilton (ed. Newlyn, 2002, 170) poses and answers the question of Coleridge the philosopher:

> Is Coleridge philosophically interesting? His philosophical output was prodigious and remarkably untidy.

Beyond literature departments, and among philosophers proper, we find that Scruton (1983, 2009) adopts Coleridge's imagination-fancy distinction; Hedley (2010, 271) champions him as 'both a learned and innovative Platonist, acutely aware of medieval and modern forms of Platonism'; the Coleridgean notion of Idea finds aesthetic use in Diffey's (1977) understanding of art as something beyond the conceptual; and Warnock

[4] The physician Thomas Beddoes, in 1793, gives perhaps the first English-language account of Kant's First Critique. He later introduces Kant to Coleridge, encouraging him and Wordsworth to visit Germany (Knight, 2004, 14).
[5] Emerson's Transcendentalism is, however, too pantheistic to be straightforwardly Coleridgean.
[6] Read esteems Coleridge as 'head and shoulders above every other English critic . . . due to his introduction of a philosophical method of criticism'.

(1974) finds in him a proto-phenomenologist with striking similarities of interest and approach to Sartre. He also receives book-length philosophical studies by Muirhead (1930); and Barfield (1971); and receives treatment as a highly influential philosopher in Ch. 1 of Skorupski's survey of English-language philosophy (1993). Indeed Skorupski (2014) now locates in Coleridge, and his influence on Mill, an important position that lies at the root of the 'Analytic-Continental divide'. In this, Skorupski follows Engell and Bate's Editor's Introduction, who assert that 'Coleridge seeks to expand the philosophical vocabulary of the British, to make it less materialistic, and to introduce to British thought the key words of Continental (especially German) thought' (*Biographia*, cxxii).

In Coleridge we find a highly influential thinker's traditionalist, syncretic philosophy, seminal in style, intent, and result. It would seem helpful to summarize the standard interpretation of Coleridge's philosophy and literary criticism, and then to offer my alternative. However, there is no standard interpretation, an observation already made fifty years ago:

> The achievement of Coleridge is rightly held to be supreme among the English critics, but no one seeking to expound it can face [the] task with much confidence. Existing expositions . . . bear so little resemblance to one another that it is difficult to believe they are about the same thing (Watson, 1962, 111)

Comparing different interpretations of Coleridge, Watson notes that for Wellek, Coleridge is merely a 'mediator' between German philosophy and his English audience; that Richards' interpretation seems to bear little relation to Coleridge's text; and that 'worst of all, the very nature of Coleridge's text forever defies clear analysis' (Watson, 1962, 111).

In part, Coleridge's resistance to clear analysis is accounted by the fact that some of his lectures have been lost; that his notebooks are, being notebooks, unpolished; and that important and insightful remarks are scattered throughout his journalism (e.g. in *The Morning Post*, and *The Courier*), self-produced periodicals (*The Watchman, The Friend*), letters, marginalia, and beyond, including, most importantly, his poetry. For various other reasons, and I will outline three, there is therefore no generally accepted, standard interpretation of Coleridge's philosophical thought.

First among these reasons is that Coleridge ultimately aims to bring the reader to a contemplative *theoria*. His work is thus eminently seminal in an educational, transformative sense. As Barfield (1971, 11) observes,

> he was so seminal a thinker that his insights and apercus tend to 'sprout in the brains' with a fertility that is positively dangerous.

Indeed, Coleridge usually and deliberately does not address the everyday modes of understanding of his readership. Instead, he addresses their capacity for reason, the imagination, and sense, through the understanding when need be, but reception by discursive analysis, though a necessary station on the way, is not the intended and eventual destination. Such educational work, then, aims to initiate and develop thinking in the reader, against which explicating any particular view, rather than eliciting intellectual vision itself, is a useful exercise, but not the ultimate aim.

Secondly, Coleridge's thought develops from deep reading in classical and modern sources, and scholars so widely read in the Humanities are rare. Chiefly influential among his sources are Plato; the Gospels; the Church Fathers and medieval thinkers; Romans such as Horace; the Neo-Platonists, especially Plotinus, and Proclus; Renaissance Italian and English literature and philosophy;[7] modern philosophers, especially Spinoza, Locke, Hartley, and Paley; and then the Germans who powerfully enter his thoughts: Leibniz, Wolff, most crucially Kant, then Fichte, Schiller, the Schlegels, and Schelling. It is easy to become distracted in following his sources, although even then the circuit should be profitable, so long as attending to the details enriches the contemplation of the leading Ideas.

A third reason is that his philosophy must be found throughout the fifty physical volumes of his corpus, comprised of thirty-four physical volumes of the fifteen numbered titles in his Collected Works (*CC*, 1969-2002); the five heavy volumes of his Collected Notebooks, each 'Text' volume with a companion volume of editor's 'Notes' (*Notebooks*, 1957-2002); and the six volumes of his Collected Letters (*Letters*, 1956-71). That there is so much to read and balance makes for another strong reason why there is no consensus on What Coleridge Thought, to quote the title of one notable and influential attempt (Barfield, 1971) to provide just that.

The aforementioned relation of Coleridge's philosophy to German idealism raises the question of plagiarism, a charge first made shortly after his death by De Quincey (1834, 511). The editors of the most recent *Biographia* edition (1983) indicate that he translates from Schelling, without proper citation, three or four pages, mainly in Chapter XII.

[7] He learns Italian as a colonial legislator in Malta, being under-secretary, then acting public secretary to Sir Alexander Ball (Kooy, 2012), and learns German to attend philosophy lectures, translating Schiller's *Wallenstein* on returning to England; he studied Greek and Latin since schooldays.

Whatever notions, such as truth as a divine ventriloquist,[8] that Coleridge mentions in *Biographia*, might be brought for exoneration, it is nevertheless an unfortunate incident arising amid a truly creative endeavor, and it cannot be seen as exemplary for scholarly practice, or composition generally.

Coleridge mentions by author and title the works to which the accusations relate, so it should be clear that this is no straightforward charge of pilfering. Moreover, we should note Schelling's opinion on the matter:

> I grant him with pleasure the borrowings from my works that were sharply, even too sharply criticized by his countrymen. . . . One should not hold such charges against a really congenial man [*Einem wirklich congenialen Mann sollte man dergleichen nicht anrechnen*]. (1857, 198)

Fruman (1971, 344) certainly goes too far in claiming that Coleridge, when he writes of Mount Amara in the first draft of 'Kubla Khan', should have cited Milton's *Paradise Lost* as a source. The published version, however, has the Abyssinian maid 'Singing of Mount Abora', which poetic line in no way requires a footnote acknowledging Milton's similar-sounding mountain.

Moving beyond Coleridge, the man and his ideas, this thesis moves towards a Coleridge-inspired theory of contemplation, drawing from his theory of imagination, Idea, and the meditative practices described in his *Notebooks* and *Letters*, and exemplified in much of his poetry, especially the Meditative Poems. My chapter (4.2) on the Notebooks is about flow, and I describe Coleridge walking and thinking, seeing into and listening for the heart of the matter. This chapter suggests a promising connection to Daoist accounts of the Way as flow, although I then give grounds for taking this connection only so far. Throughout this dissertation, my notion of the *con-templum* operates explicitly or implicitly, and it is in the Notebooks chapter that I gather my thoughts on contemplative beholding as a steady act of appreciative attention, a stretching to hear.

I find in intellectual effort activities that essentially comprise training in spiritual progress, and such effort produces and sustains attention, discernment, concentration, holding-together and holding-apart, mental retention and release. I therefore see training in the liberal arts of mathematics, music, poetics, composition, history, and intellectual education generally, as strengthening rational freedom. Beyond the purview of the

[8] Ficino's phrase (*De furore divino*, 1457), used by Coleridge, *Biographia* I, 164.

examination process, the educational goal is not so much to grasp thoughts as attaining to thinking itself. Thus Coleridge, in his periodical *The Friend*, writes,

> By THOUGHT I here mean the voluntary production in our minds of those states of consciousness, to which, as to his fundamental facts, the Writer has referred us: while ATTENTION has for its object the order and connection of Thoughts and Images, each of which is in itself already and familiarly known. Thus the elements of Geometry require attention only; but the analysis of our primary faculties, and the investigation of all the absolute grounds of Religion and Morals, are impossible without energies of Thought in addition to the effort of Attention. THE FRIEND will not attempt to disguise from his Readers that both Attention and Thought are Efforts, and the latter a most difficult and laborious Effort (*Friend* I, 16-17)

Imagination is a species of creatively active and attentively perceptive intellection that energetically unites thought with images in aesthetically expressing Ideas, which require such expression if they are to have meaning in human life. Contemplation is the attending to Ideas imaginatively approached, requiring the active creation of both the space to receive Ideas and the aesthetic forms in which to convey them. The purely noetic aspect of this mental or spiritual act, considered supreme in Plato, Aristotle, the *Bhagavad Gita*, Aquinas, and so on, gives a space (a *con-templum*) in which the Ideal can be approached. This Ideal is the 'beyond being' of the good and the beautiful.

The Ideality of the beyond being can be discerned in the understanding that an *ought* cannot be derived from an *is*, an understanding which philosophers usually develop from Hume's *Treatise* (1739-40, III.i). For Hume, however, the radical separation between the Ideal (which is sometimes called the normative, or that principle towards which our standards conform) and the observed demonstrates the impossibility of ethical reasoning (and perhaps the unreality of the Ideal). I argue, in contrast, that the is-ought distinction demonstrates only that value, though informing perception, is itself inaccessible to observation, being the measure of the world, and thus unworldly and supernatural, to paraphrase Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, 6.41 (cf. *Culture and Value*, p. 5). Value's proper place, for us, is in thought and in the aesthetic modification of perception in accordance with thought, and, by extension, in traditions and cultural practices, which cultivate and preserve, in often unconscious and habitual forms, conscious and reflectively considerate thinking. Contemplation, then, is the experience whereby Ideas are appreciated as the transcendent meanings and values applicable to our lives.

Coleridge argues for the necessity of imagination in thinking Ideas, directing the mind not towards phenomena, but their underlying principles. For him, works of fancy and mere understanding in art and discourse (e.g. philosophy) engage in abstraction and

generalization, rather than aiming at values and ideals, which are not phenomena but give significance to phenomena. Fancy, then, has an arbitrariness unconstrained by truth and reality. This arbitrariness is not always a bad thing, and it is involved in producing self-consciousness, which is one among several benefits that fancy, in Coleridge's view, confers. One aim of this thesis is to examine the validity of the imagination-fancy distinction, and the insights it affords.

Coleridge emphasizes the role of imagination in grasping Ideas (which are directed not towards phenomena, but their underlying principles) and believes that works of fancy and mere understanding in art and philosophical discourse are dominated by abstractions and generalizations, rather than values that alone give significance to phenomena. I investigate Coleridge's theory of Ideas and relate it to the very different respective theories of Plato, Plotinus, and Kant on this subject. In the process, I challenge the opinion that Coleridge abandons his passionate interest in the imagination in order to focus on what some see as the drier subject of Ideas. In my interpretation, not only Coleridge's philosophy but also his poetry revolves around the three key notions of imagination, Idea, and contemplation. In this thesis I explore their articulation in his Notebooks, philosophical writings, and his meditative poems. I interpret some of his Meditative Poems in Blank Verse from *Sibylline Leaves*, and some other of his poems in order to show Coleridgean theory in poetic practice.

In the final chapters I propose a poetic art of living that relates imagination, Idea, and contemplative activity. This *ars biographica poetica* sees living a life as a *poiesis*, a poetic creation of values, aims, and constraints that develops through awareness of poetic technique (rhyme and reason) and, to paraphrase Coleridge, by possession of Ideas rather than being possessed by them. I propose a model of contemplation that is an imaginative, non-conceptual attending to an Idea, or Ideas. In this notion of contemplation a space is opened so that attention can be given, without distraction, to what is contemplated.

Part One. Coleridge's Romanticized Plato

This Part makes two main claims for Coleridge: (1) that he has a philosophical lineage to Plato through the Neo-Platonists, the Italian Renaissance thinkers Ficino and Bruno, and the Cambridge Platonists;[9] and (2) that his system modifies Plato's epistemology and ontology to yield a philosophical frame for Romanticism. Part One, then, examines how Coleridge Romanticizes Platonism. I examine Plato's Divided Line analogy (*Republic*, Bk VI), central to his epistemology and ontology, and argue that Coleridge creatively recasts this schema, by finding a higher role for a radically re-thought imagination. Through this recast imagination, Ideas affect the understanding. Without imagination, the understanding is unenlightened, remaining with abstracted concepts as though they were the end and apex of thinking. Coleridge's elevating imagination and modifying Plato's linear scheme into a polarity, and thereby bringing out the harmony between sense and reason, results in a maturely developed Romantic Platonism.

The Divided Line passage schematizes Plato's theory of knowledge and being. I show Coleridge to modify this schema in creating his polar order of the mental faculties, which we can envision with reason at the north pole, and sense the south. Arguing for Coleridge's Platonic pedigree, I will show how he reformulates imagination from *eikasia* and *aisthesis* and elevates it above the understanding, or Plato's *dianoia*. I will also argue that his modifying imagination from Plato's view of it conforms to Plato's actual use of poetic description, symbol, and myth.

By reorganizing Plato's Divided Line (see fig. 1, end of Part One) to balance the faculties into a holistic polar system, Coleridge brings out a harmony between the extremes of intellectual reason and aesthetic sense, and thus returns a dignity to *aisthesis*, or sensory intuition. Much of Romanticism's appeal lies in this dignity returned to imagination. Although for Coleridge, sense remains, as in Plato, the lowest extremity of the mental order, in his Romantic system extremes now meet in a kind of harmony. Thus reason is intuitive, as sense intuits; and sense connects non-conceptually, as *noesis* connects beyond concepts. Coleridge's romanticized *aisthesis* becomes reason's unselfconscious counterpart, able to feel beauty in the sensible, and to unreflectively, pre-intellectually seek for meaning and value in what feels right.

[9] In supporting this claim, I am allied to Coleridge himself (*Biographia*), and to Hedley (2000, 11-23). Coleridge claims his position develops within Platonic, perennial philosophy, and that his interest in German idealist philosophers (esp. Kant, Fichte, and Schelling) deepens with their reinterpretation of Platonic notions.

1.1 Views on Platonic *muthos*

A Romantic reading of Plato is possible in two complementary ways. There is the Plato read through and interpreted by Romantic philosophers and poets. There is also the proto-Romantic Plato, anticipating nineteenth-century Romanticism by over two thousand years and influencing them directly. Besides Plato's direct influence, his proto-Romanticism becomes amplified, as we will see, through the Neo-Platonists, such as Plotinus and Proclus, both of whom are already strong influences on Coleridge before he reads Plato. Proto-Romantic Platonism is further amplified through Italian Renaissance humanists such as Ficino, who invents the notion of Platonic love and first leads the Platonic Academy (also called the Florentine Academy). Further proto-Romantic Platonist influences are the Renaissance humanists Mirandola, whose syncretism is a model for Coleridge's own, and Bruno, whose polar philosophy deeply impresses Coleridge. Then follows the German mystic, Böhme, whose vision of the eternal through ordinary things like sunlight in a pewter dish profoundly affect William Blake and Coleridge. The list of Proto-Romantic Platonists who influence Coleridge is too long to detail, but a last mention should at least include the Böhme-inspired Cambridge Platonists, most notably Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, as well as the English and Scottish divines, Jeremy Taylor and Robert Leighton. All of these profound thinkers are tributaries to the often-underground Platonic river. Their confluence in Coleridge builds a pressure such that:

> A mighty fountain momently was forced:
> Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
> Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
> Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
> And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
> It flung up momently the sacred river. ('Kubla Khan', ll. 19-24)

In Coleridge, Plato's mantic poet is no ancient myth but walks (and how he walks!), and talks, (and oh he talks!) among us.

> And all who heard should see them there,
> And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
> His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
> Weave a circle round him thrice,
> And close your eyes with holy dread
> For he on honey-dew hath fed,
> And drunk the milk of Paradise. (ll. 48-54)

Just as the vaulting fragment 'Kubla Khan' contrasts the 'sacred river' that runs 'through caverns measureless to man' (ll. 3-4) (and thus deeper than all humanism and

relativism) against a 'twice five miles' patch of civilization 'with walls and towers girdled round' (ll. 6-7), Plato has often been read as part transcendent mystic and part dry and dialectical logician. And just like 'Kubla Khan', the truth lies not in their separation, but in the fertility of their union, in 'gardens bright with sinuous rills / Where blossom'd many an incense-bearing tree' (l. 9). A proto-Romantic strain, a 'deep romantic chasm' (l. 11), is interpretable throughout the dynamic, creative tension between Plato's rational, intellectual philosophy and its impassioned, imagistic poetic expression. As Lovejoy says, 'it is evident that there had always been present in the Platonic tradition a principle tending towards Romanticism' (1936, 297). I will show how Coleridge adapts Plotinian approaches to Plato in order to develop an unmediated sensual-ideal defence of poetry within a Platonic vein.

I identify a divisionary approach to Plato in authors such as Crombie (1963), Hare (1982), and Perkins (1997) who argue for reading 'two Platos'. Such readings rightly discern a creative tension in Plato between (1) the search for definitional clarity and metaphysical precision, and (2) his poetic turns when gesturing towards ineffables such as the contemplation of the Forms, confrontation with Beauty, and the encounter with daimonic conscience. However, talk of two Platos, misleads. That binary phrase is not subtle enough to express the creative tension in Plato, a dynamic necessarily present in the nature of the problems he pursues.

This divisionary approach is avoided by Coleridge, who sees Plato's poetry, the 'music in his soul' (*Biographia* II, 20),[10] not as divergent from his philosophy, but as impelling it towards contemplative perfection:

> For Plato was a poet of such excellence as would have stood all other competition but that of his being a philosopher. His poetic genius imported in him those deep impressions and a love of them, mocking all comparison with after objects, leaves behind it thirst for something not attained, to which nothing in life is found commensurate and which still impels the soul to pursue. (*Phil. Lects* I, 183)

Republic 376-7 has Socrates distinguish between true and false story types, and then make the startling claim that education, at least of the very young, should begin with false stories. When pressed, he clarifies that he is talking about mythos, which, he says, is false in general, but contains some truth (377a). Those myths conveying moral truth have pedagogic value. In contrast, Socrates criticizes excerpts of Hesiod's *Theogony* that portray the gods not as divine paragons, but as wicked beings indulging

[10] Also, 'Dejection', l. 60: 'What this strong music in the soul may be!'

in cannibalism, impiety and patricide. Such myths are censured not only because they wrongly portray divinity, but also because they establish bad models.

Nevertheless, myth can be an exemplary transmitter of values to young minds. Coleridge echoes Plato's esteem for the educational benefit of truth in myth:

> Should children be permitted to read Romances, & Relations of Giants & Magicians, & Genii?—I know all that has been said against it; but I have formed my faith in the affirmative. —I know no other way of giving the mind a love of 'the Great', & 'the Whole.'—Those who have been led by the same truths step by step thro' the constant testimony of their senses, seem to me to want a sense which I possess—They contemplate nothing but *parts*—and all *parts* are necessarily little—and the Universe to them is but a mass of *little things.* (*Letters* I, 210)

Coleridge adds to Socrates' esteem of truth in myth a notion that myths and romances inspire a love of the infinite and universal that could not be communicated in sober accounts of actual events. The Ideal, then, can be stirringly though unclearly communicated through imaginative tales where strictly factual accounts fail. Classicist Murray supports this view that at least in some passages, Plato employs *muthos* (myth) not just for gentle persuasion, but because his meaning cannot be communicated through analytic, conceptual description:

> Here the status of the myth . . . seeks to embody truths which analytical language cannot capture, truths which can only be presented pictorially: the graphic and at times bizarre detail which is so striking a feature of Plato's mythical writing reinforces the sense that what is being portrayed is an imagined world in which he wants us to believe, but which cannot be literally described. (2011, 188)

Consonant with my position that Plato's earlier, confrontationally elenchtic dialogues aporetically reveal that Ideas cannot be conceptually defined and that an imaginative approach is therefore needed, Murray argues that:

> Unlike the sophists who use myth for illustrative purposes or as exegetical tools, Plato's myths are integral to his philosophy. (189)

Tracing Plato's influence on Coleridge, Vigus (2009) argues that Coleridge's Platonism is genuine, to which I add that he modifies Platonism, sometimes in the light of Plotinus, and sometimes via Kant and Schelling, as he shapes British Romanticism.

Geuss propagates what I believe to be the mistaken view, which he calls post-Romantic, that interprets Plato as championing 'a highly specific kind of propositional knowledge' to have 'virtually unlimited value' regarding ethical and practical life (2004, 156; see also 2003). This must be mistaken, because for Plato the highest form of knowledge, *noesis*, or noetic contemplation of the Forms, is ultimately non-

propositional, despite the epistemological ascent to this position through conceptual *dianoia* and logical dialectic.

Repeatedly, Plato's Socrates shows that everyday conceptual and definitional discourses are in fact rationalizations that thinly coat a veneer of logic to gloss and defend opinions that remain uncorrected. Nietzsche, Geuss, and other post-Romantic critics fail to appreciate how Plato's examination of opinion and commonplace constitutes a genuinely radical thinking that uproots false opinion where their own only truncates it to be grafted with another. Socrates' examination of taken-for-granted opinions reveals them as ultimately aporetic, i.e. self-contradictory and leading nowhere. Only once the aporia have been recognized can the mind reject hollow opinon and be stirred by its newly discovered sensation of intellectual emptiness to feel a genuine hunger for knowledge. The Socratic solution to aporetic lostness is the way-finding of dialectic, described as aporia's positive opposite, i.e. as *poreia* (journey) (*Republic*, 532b).

I can only, therefore, partly accept Geuss's position that Plato considers poetry 'not a reliable vehicle for correct knowledge' and that the:

> Romantics tried to reverse Plato's specific account of poetry and its valuation, claiming that it was an important kind of knowledge (2004, 152)

The reality is not so simple, considering (a) Plato's consummate use of elevated, poetic language to convey the otherwise ineffable views that the high points of his dialogues indicate, and (b) that in the *Republic* (e.g. X, 607a-d); and in the *Laws* (e.g. VII, 817d) Plato commends certain possibilities of poetic achievement as edifying.

The poetry of Diotima of Mantinea's (Mantinea evokes *mantikē*, prophecy) instruction to Socrates on the *anabasmoi*, in the *Symposium*; the *Phaedrus*' charioteer driving winged horses symbolizing the soul's spirited ascent to contemplation of the Forms as an ascent occasioned by the encounter with Love and Beauty; the allegory of the prisoners in the cave to show the illusory, shadowy nature of appearance taken for reality; the myth of the demiurge in the *Timaeus* to convey the theoretical role of the Forms not as creating the world, but as needed for the order experienced in it. These are passages of the greatest poetic genius. While Plato knew he ought to use the clearest propositional language as far as it could take him, he was equally certain that propositional explication could not take us all the way. As Kahn writes,

> Plato is the only major philosopher who is also a supreme literary artist. There is no writer more complex, and there is no other philosopher whose work calls for so many levels of interpretation. (1996, xiii)

One of Coleridge's key modifications to Platonism is to place his Romantically reconceived imagination between Plato's levels of *noesis* (reason) and *dianoia* (mathematical and scientific understanding). The dividing lines are not to be conceived strictly, and we do well to recall Coleridge's aphorism that:

> It is a dull and obtuse mind, that must divide in order to distinguish; but it is a still worse, that distinguishes in order to divide. (*Reflection*, 33)

My aim is to show first a Platonic model of mind, knowledge, and being, and then to show how Coleridge modifies Plato to create a Romanticized Platonism. I will therefore need to examine some relevant themes in Plato before returning to Coleridge to see how he adapts and modifies his Platonic heritage.

A creative tension between the mystical and the logical is evident in Plato's writings. This tension is doubtless partly related to his attraction to Pythagoreanism, with its tendency to number mysticism, the belief that number is the fundamental constituent of the universe, and that the harmony of the spheres is the result of the mathematico-musical order held to be found in the cosmos. The Pythagorean School holds that number *is* mystical. Another mystical current in Plato is the example of Socrates' *daimon,* a divine conscience, inducing a trance that led him to corrective contemplation before he unintentionally offended the divine. Thus his daimon brought him to that stillness required for beholding and respecting genuine value, sometimes causing him to pause mid-conversation for hours.

Mystikos's original meaning is 'closed lips and eyes', later denoting an initiate into sacred mysteries; it literally means a tacit response to the ineffable. Coleridge relates the non-discursive aspects of mystical response to the contemplative approach towards Ideas, which, being praeter-conceptual,[11] are not amenable to conceptual (empirical or a priori constitutive) adequation with phenomena:[12]

> MYSTES, from the Greek μύω—one who *muses* with closed lips, as meditating on *Ideas* which may indeed be suggested and awakened, but cannot, like the images of sense and conceptions of the understanding, be adequately *expressed* by words. (*Constitution*, 165)

[11] My term for values and *noemata* beyond conceptual understanding.
[12] Cf. Aquinus (*Summa* I, Q.16 (Truth), A.2) writes that '*Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*', outlining a correspondence theory of truth as the intellect making itself adequate to the thing, which notion he attributes to the Neo-Platonist Isaac Israeli.

He then provides a much-needed and clear distinction between mysticism, whose proponents contemplate Ideas without which no perfectible guiding standard is possible, and pseudo-mysticism, a false attempt to justify undisciplined flow with the currents of fantasy, unreflective thought, and desire:

> Where a person mistakes the anomalous misgrowths of his own individuality for ideas, or truths of universal reason, he may, without impropriety, be called a *Mystic*, in the abusive sense of the term; though pseudo-mystic, or phantast, would be a more proper designation. Heraclitus, Plato, Bacon, Leibniz, were Mystics, in the primary sense of the term: Iamblichus, and his successors, Phantasts. (*Constitution*, 165)

Plato is also keen to distinguish philosophical attention to Ideas from cynical attempts to persuade opinion and emotion. The *Ion* explores rhapsodic influence as a pre-philosophic persuasion that irrationally transfigures the audience through technical mastery of an at least metaphorically physical force (animal magnetism) and not a philosophical ordination of mind according to ultimate Ideas. Socrates's daimonic trance is of a higher level, and Plato shows it to be purer and more mysterious than rhapsodic *technē*. While rhapsodic persuasion can be understood as human magnetism, or hypnotic compulsion, Socrates's morally intuitive *daimon* awakens him to the Good intuited by reason. The Socratic trance is mystical, but is not thereby mystifying, as it does not obscure clearly expressible notions.

Hare, with a lightness of touch that barely avoids satire, interprets the tension between the mystical and the logical as indicating two Platos: Pato and Lato. Although Hare's book is no authority to most scholars of Classical Greek Philosophy, it derives from a clearly argued, but I think wrong, opinion given by Crombie, whose work is still well regarded. I suppose that Hare first finds his notion of two Platos in Crombie's serious analysis of Platonic doctrines (1963). Kuang-Ming Wu finds a shortcoming in Crombie's division, namely that:

> Crombie did not raise the question whether poetry had any philosophical significance, why there are two Platos, whether the one Plato helps or hinders the other, and if so how. (1990, 268)

I agree entirely with Wu's suggestion of a deeply philosophical significance in poetic expression and insight. Hamilton recognizes the same importance of poetic resonance in philosophical expression when he finds that Analytic-style re-descriptions of Wittgenstein's condensed and pregnant aphoristic prose fail to convey the thinker's original insights and the liberating directions of his wrangling concentration. As Hamilton sees it:

> Wittgenstein's aphoristic remarks have a power derived from the extreme compression and resonance found in the greatest poetry; this is lost when translated into Analytic-style plain argument. (2014, Ch. 10.2, forthcoming)

To this I add that the power of the poetic expression and the logical confidence in its objects both stem from the *theoria* (Gk. gazing at), or clarity of contemplative wisdom (seeing with the mind's eye, as Shakespeare says),[13] or at the very least from the philosophical approach thereto. Thus, as my thesis argues, the concentrated, attentive power of discernment is a spiritual quality whose propaedeutic is meditative practice, which need not be rigidly systematic, and whose end is contemplation, and that this power is the root of philosophic and poetic genius. Moreover, it follows that when connection to the root is severed or denied, neither philosophical nor poetic genius can flourish or be recognized.

On the force of compression of expressed thought and poetical resonance, Hamilton continues:

> To many philosophers, such considerations are irrelevant, a distraction from the business of philosophy. But other readers have found this a supreme virtue of Wittgenstein's writing, and its aphoristic quality is one that has attracted artists and writers. This highly compressed expression of thoughts is fundamental to his philosophical thinking. (2014, Ch 10.2, forthcoming)

Hamilton here implies that there are for some, especially for Analytic-style philosophers, two Wittgensteins, with the poetic one readily disregarded, or, if the poetical, stylistic Wittgenstein is mentioned, it is only for it to be dismissed as gnomic. I would add, to Hamilton's insight into the place of poetry and style in philosophy, that Wittgenstein's highly compressed expression of thoughts is the very principle of his philosophical thinking. I mean that there are not two Wittgensteins, nor two Platos, but rather that where we encounter philosophical genius concentratedly expressed through style and organization describing a view, there we find a love of wisdom that is so close to becoming wisdom itself that its very expression initiates philosophy in the audience.

In the penultimate page of Crombie's two-volume examination of Plato's doctrines, he identifies two Platos, the poet, and the rationalist. Thus,

[13] *Hamlet*, I.ii. Coleridge borrows this phrase to describe reason (*Friend* I, 157) after calling it the 'organ of the supersensuous' (156). Cf. *Republic*, 533c, describing *noesis* as 'the eye of the soul' (cf. 518-9). See also St Gregory (Hom. xiv in Ezech.): 'The contemplative life is sweetness exceedingly lovable; for it carries the soul away above itself, it opens heaven and discovers the spiritual world to the eyes of the mind.'

> He had an almost unequalled stylistic gift . . . He could be absolutely lucid . . . however . . . He thought perhaps that an undue attention to the exposition of an argument or to the precise words which were chosen to convey an opinion would distract attention from the realities which were under discussion; and he thought also that an eye fixed steadily on realities was the only sure defence against the deceptions of words. (1979, 568)

This description is sound, probably alluding to statements in Plato's putative Seventh Letter, the *Phaedrus*, and elsewhere, that the most important truths – the Fifth, or the quintessence, the thing itself which is known and truly exists, beyond the Four of (1) name, (2) account, or definition, (3) image, and (4) knowledge – exceed discursive explication (*Letter VII*, 324a-e).

However, and I argue he goes wrong here, Crombie then dismisses the poetic style, so often used by Plato, as philosophically unessential. As Crombie states his opinion:

> it is commonly the case that he uses his unique gift of prose-poetry to set them in a certain emotional atmosphere.

From this position it is natural, though unfortunate, that Crombie asserts that:

> For this reason there is not one Plato but many; you find in him to some extent what you are looking for, and if the plain sense of the words does not support your interpretation, perhaps you will be able to base it on the general feeling of the passage, or *vice versa*. (1979, 568)

From this position, with some positive understanding of Plato, and, I argue, some serious misunderstanding, views like Hare's arise that multiply Platos beyond necessity. For Hare, one Plato, whom he calls Pato, is an eternity-inspired mystic advocating ascetic contemplation, eschewing worldly opinion and ambition. This interpretation traces much further back than Crombie, and goes back to the Gnostics, whose view Plotinus attacks as a simplistic and reductive interpretation of Plato as proposing that the phenomenal world is a dreary prison for the divine spark that is soul (II.9).

Hare suggests that his mystical Pato 'would have been at home in a Zen Buddhist monastery' (1982, 26). The 'other' Plato, Lato, pursues Analytic philosophy, and seeks definitions and linguistic meaning, skilfully employing dialectic to unravel ethical, ontological, and epistemological problems, revealing their *aporia* (Gk: 'without passage', 'impassable', or 'pathlessness'). This analytic Plato is more often than not content to leave a problem unsolved but more clearly circumscribed, than to propose theories or to be otherwise dogmatic.

Hare presents a breezy account of two Platos and thereby obscures the point of the *one* Plato working within a creative tension of currents and against the inherent limits of the written word. By proposing that the pursuit of definition and the exploration of

positions through dialectic is that of a rational, analytic Plato separate from what one might call the vestigial prose-poetry of contemplative vision, Hare and others falsely multiply Plato, refusing to accept the poetical passages as genuine philosophy.[14] Thus they miss dialectic's aim, which is:

> like the wind, wherever our discussion leads us, that is the way we must go. (*Republic*, 394d)

Where dialectic leads is not always comfortable, and this dialectic is no dry, professionally academic process that excludes the possibility of spiritual journey (*poreia*) and vision (*theoria*).

Developing his view of Philosophy as a Way of Life, Hadot (1995) describes Platonic *elenchos* as a 'spiritual exercise', borrowing Ignatius of Loyola's term, within that way. *Elenchos,* or cross-examination, sometimes benumbs the participant, exposing *aporia* in definitions and making one feel stung by a stingray, as Plato has Meno say (*Meno*, 80a). Socratic *elenchos,* reveals aporia and a newly recognized ignorance, which acknowledgement of lack creates a desire for genuine examination.[15] Awakened desire is thus transformed into a sound pedagogic principle through the Socratic challenge. *Elenchos* and dialectic are spiritual exercises that constitute a philosophical pilgrim's progress that is necessarily deeply personal. Coleridge adopts this awakening strategy in his lectures and, as he explains in an 1819 letter, he aims:

> to keep the audience awake and interested . . . and to leave a *sting* behind—i.e., a disposition to study the subject anew, under the light of a new principle. (*Letters* IV, no. 924)

To understand and accept one's ignorance one must first struggle against it, and then, eventually, welcome this revelation because at last one now sincerely craves truth over opinion. Philosophy is thus maieutic, and cannot truly produce its most valuable, transformative effects solely through lecturing and publishing. The proper understanding of philosophical problems is radically personal because they are at root persons, body and soul, who must undertake to understand. Socrates is supposed to have said that written philosophy is secondary, and Plato adopts this view in his Seventh

[14] On falsely dividing Plato, cf. Boethius, [c.524] 1999, I.iii.7 (p. 7), criticizing the mobs of Epicureans, Stoics, et al, who try to plunder inherited wisdom and kidnap personified Philosophia, but succeed only in shredding her hand-woven gown, each declaring their own rag the whole of Philosophy.

[15] Kingsley (2003, 150-6) discusses *elenchos* in Parmenides philosophical poem, whereby, as with Socrates, our state of ignorance is exposed, evoking an unbearable longing for truth and the absolute.

Letter, arguing that philosophy only really occurs in the face-to-face *elenchos*, or ironic questioning, that reveals aporia and ignorance.

Philosophy constantly renews its movement towards the first principles that Plato calls the *archē*. Plato notes, in *Republic* Book VI, that, mathematicians, geometers, and others working in specialist fields proceed from assumed hypotheses, whereas philosophers work best when working towards first principles, and never from hypotheses and assumptions. Philosophy, then, seeks to renew the movement towards first principles. In doing so, it addresses individual thoughts, opinions, propositions, arguments, theories, and views. Thus seeking truth, it simultaneously remedies or removes fallacious thoughts, opinions, etc., from individual minds and discursive consciousness.

Challenging a modern-postmodern view that construes Plato as philosophy's villain who turns rationality into absolute power and inflicts an ideal of universals and grand narratives, Perkins (1997), following Bernstein (1992), identifies recent anti-Platonism with a twentieth-century move against logocentrism exemplified by Derrida. Coleridge's 'other Plato', Perkins argues, warns against atomizing experience into mere phenomena. Thus Coleridge champions the Plato who, with 'unmitigated hostility, pursues the assumptions, abstractions, generalities, and verbal legerdemain of the sophists!' (*Friend* I, 482). This 'other Plato', like Hare's Pato, understands, in Perkins' divisionary view, that the objects of *noesis* cannot be represented, because any representation would involve concepts, images, and abstractions, and thus fall short of the *noesis*. Hence the 'other Plato' often discusses the movement towards the *noemata* (the Ideas) with self-consciously poetic symbolism, allegories and similes.

Perkins attributes negative postmodernist opinions of Plato and Coleridge to a philosophical collective unconscious that, since the seventeenth century, has separated reality:

> into a 'really real' which is phenomenal, and directly experienced . . . on the one hand, and a parallel but entirely subjective reality, on the other. The latter may be emotionally, aesthetically and morally significant but has no claims to universality. (1997, 33)

Platonism is hence prone to be dubbed 'otherworldly', and Coleridge is sometimes said to have been better off 'confining his metaphysical meanderings to poetry' (1997, 33).[16] Contrary to this opinion, Coleridge holds that he pursues a Platonic realism, regarding principles as logically antecedent to phenomena.

[16] Perkins opposes this view, as do I.

The notion of two Platos at first seems useful for distinguishing currents within the dialogues, but ultimately it must be seen as superficial. Within the so-called analytic Plato operates the current aiming towards ultimate knowledge, via a process that requires *aporia* to be contemplated, ignorance to be recognized, and stubborn, cherished opinions to be abandoned as the participants negotiate the rational and spiritual obstacle course of dialectic.

Within the so-called mystical Plato are quite logical arguments asserting, for example, that sensibles proposed as examples of Justice are flawed, and can also be shown to be unjust. Any particular police officer, lawyer, or law can suggest Justice, but can also lead to injustice in some case or other. This is not to make the trivial observation that particulars are not universals, but rather that if we wish to know what, say, 'intelligence' is, observing examples of intelligent individuals will provide an initial guide, but can also lead us astray until we progress from observing sensibles to a more general approach dealing with abstracts. Again, from the abstracts, with their theories, schemata and axioms taken for granted in their sciences, one can dialectically progress towards *noesis*.

The *Phaedrus* discloses the beauty pursued by the so-called 'other', poetic Plato. Introducing the *Laws*, Plato's nineteenth-century English translator, Benjamin Jowett, praises this poetry as:[17]

> the higher art of the *Phaedrus*, in which the summer's day, and the cool stream, and the chirping of grasshoppers, and the fragrance of the *agnus castus* [chaste tree], and the legends of the place are present to the imagination throughout the discourse. (Jowett, in Plato, 1875, p. 5)

Here, Socrates attempts to better Lysias' speech on love, and temporarily succumbs to superficially rational rhetoric over single-minded philosophy. He basically adopts and improves Lysias' argument that a youth should choose a suitor who is calm, rational, and not really in love.[18]

[17] Jowett contrasts the *Phaedrus*'s idyllic scene by the R. Illisos with the gloomy Cretan cave temple in the *Laws*.

[18] The *Phaedrus* not only discusses rationally self-interested seduction versus love the beloved more than oneself, but it embodies the contrast. Enthusiastic young Phaedrus has something (a scroll of Lysias's speech on love and madness) that Socrates desires and pursues. Likewise, Socrates has a critical reflection and a love of wisdom that Phaedrus desires. Phaedrus seduces the civic philosopher into the riverside scene where naiads might enchant his reason by stirring his emotions. Socrates first tries to upstage his rival Lysias' speech, thus failing to transcend rational self-interest. His daimonic sign, however, inspires his second speech, which again sees love as madness, but a divinely bestowed madness that can only be thought deficient from a lower level.

It cannot be over-stressed, though I have never seen it adequately discussed at all, that the *Phaedrus* dialogue not only discusses cynical and rationally self-interested seduction versus that love which esteems the beloved over the lover, but also exemplifies the contrast by embodying it. Enthusiastic young Phaedrus has something (a scroll of Lysias's speech on lovers, denouncing love as madness and promoting cynical erotic arrangements) that Socrates desires and pursues. Likewise, Socrates has habits of critical reflection and an experienced love of wisdom that make Phaedrus desire his assistance to discover the truth about love.

Phaedrus seduces the civic philosopher, reluctant to leave the city walls, into the riverside scene where naiads might enchant his reason and nymphs stir his emotions. Here, in competitive flow, Socrates attempts one-upmanship, succeeding in upstaging Lysias' speech, growing eloquent against *erôs* and in support of the non-lover. Yet with this minor social success he fails to escape the rationally self-interested, egoistic horizons that encircle his rival. Fortunately, however, this flow is stilled by his *daimon*. The divine gift inspires an apology to Love itself, as he realizes that the previous arguments were 'clever, but not wise'. After his palinode, he begins his second speech, again seeing love as madness, but now – in contrast to Lysias' trammelled vision – love's madness is beheld as divine, a sublime marvel that can nevertheless only be seen as deficient from the lower level.

Then follows the celebrated account of love as *theia mania*, divine madness.[19] Plato relates this inspired wisdom beyond cleverness to his theory of the Forms. The genuine lover, described as a charioteer driving a pair of winged horses, forces the appetitive, unruly, Earth-bound horse to follow the noble, heaven-bound horse. In the Platonic account, beyond heaven, all is without shape and can only be seen, in the vision (wisdom) of *theoria*, with the intelligent mind. In this state, such Forms as Justice, *Sôphrosunê* or Self-possession, and Beauty can be contemplated. In the analogy, experiencing beauty in another person is a spur to contemplation of the Form of Beauty, hence it is argued as unwise either to eschew beauty or to give way to it only sensually.

Without the grace of divine madness, the Forms are to be approached by dialectic. What Plato actually means by dialectic is a topic of perennial debate. Popper (1962) considers Plato's dialectic to be based on a doctrine of mystical intuition and dismissed him as a mystic with totalitarian tendencies. By dialectic, does Plato mean an apparently

[19] For an excellent reading of Plato's *theia mania*, see Pieper, [1989] 1995.

irrational connection to knowledge of Reality, through intuition of the Forms? Or is the movement of dialectic wholly logical, advancing by refutations and modifications, a prototype of the very method Popper himself holds as enabling progression in science? Evidence for both of these interpretations can be found in Plato's writings, and the creative tension described above works between these meanings. The mystical *noesis* inspired by the *daimon* in the dramatic dialogues shows a proto-Romantic side to Plato, who then expresses this inspiration with poetic analogies.

Coleridge raises the status and function of imagination in general culture, and within the Platonic tradition. From Plato; through Plotinus and post-Plotinian philosophers, especially Proclus – an influential source for Hegel, as well as for Coleridge, who reads him, when not in Greek, through Thomas Taylor's translations; through Renaissance Platonist philosophical artists such as Dante, Shakespeare, and Spenser; and then through eighteenth-century Platonizing aestheticians such as Shaftesbury; to the Romantics, the role of imagination grew in importance, finding its high point in Coleridge's system.

This growth results in a Platonism more receptive to exploring and communicating ideas in and through the arts than Plato is traditionally interpreted as advocating. This Romantic, art-friendly Platonism (cf. Perkins' 'other Plato') is ideal for Romantics from Schelling to Shelley. Plato explores questions of the highest philosophical and intellectual order through dramatic dialogue, rather than first-person, scholarly exposition. This method follows the Socratic intuition that philosophical education, as *educare*, or drawing out, is more akin to midwifery, the profession of Socrates' mother, than being an attempt to fill minds with knowledge.

Plato recognizes the philosophical need for wonder, amazement, being shocked and dumbfounded. Far from denigrating human emotion in favour of a pure, mathematical reason, Plato presents a higher synthesis of a sensible world that has intelligibility insofar as it has a formality through the Ideas. For Plato, spiritedness, receptiveness to sensual love and beauty, and the mood of wonder are important motors for the highest *noesis* of the philosophical attitude. Hence the appeal of Plato to the Romantics who seek to unite deep feeling with profound thought.

Discussing Wordsworth's particular genius, Coleridge writes that,

> it was the union of deep feeling with profound thought, the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed. (*Biographia* I, 80)

Wordsworth describes reason in passion in much the same terms as Plato uses in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, with the Lakeland poet hymning 'passion, which itself / Is highest reason in a soul sublime' ('The Prelude', Bk. V, ll. 40-41). Seeking wisdom with love, and sensual intelligibility, Coleridge calls,

> O for some Sun that shall unite Light and Warmth. (*Notebooks* 1, 467)

The Romantics thus embrace Platonic themes such as the unity of Truth and Beauty explicit in John Keats' 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'. Shelley translates Plato's *Ion* and *Symposium*, and calls Plato 'essentially a poet' in a tract embodying the Platonizing Romantic spirit:

> The distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error. The distinction between philosophers and poets has been anticipated. Plato was essentially a poet—the truth and splendour of his imagery, and the melody of his language, are the most intense that it is possible to conceive . . . . All the authors of revolutions in opinion are not only necessarily poets as they are inventors, nor even as their words unveil the permanent analogy of things by images which participate in the life of truth; but as their periods are harmonious and rhythmical, and contain in themselves the elements of verse; being the echo of the eternal music. . . . Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton (to confine ourselves to modern writers) are philosophers of the very loftiest power.
>
> A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth. (*A Defence of Poetry*, § 8-9, written 1821, [1840, posthumous], 1977)

The Romantics are drawn to the unity of opposites they read in Plato: the epistemology written in dramatic form; the spirited synthesis of reason and passion; the poetic passages continuing where rational argument with literal concepts gives way to the symbolic. Coleridge's scheme of the mental faculties (see Figure 1, p. 65 below, end of Part One; see also Appendix A), his counterpart to Plato's Divided Line, harmonizes the extremes and the middle sections. Thus in Coleridge's writings it is explicit that reason is present in sense such that sense is more akin to its opposite in the scale (Reason) than to its neighbour (Fancy). Such harmonies are never explicit in Plato's system.

Hence I see Coleridge's scheme as modifying Plato's to afford two new possibilities:

1. That artistic activity may co-operate with the highest intellectual activity. As Schelling's Romantic philosophy argues:

> If aesthetic intuition is merely intellectual intuition become objective, it is self-evident that art is at once the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy, which ever and again continues to speak to us of what philosophy cannot depict in external form. . . . Art is paramount to the philosopher . . . . [I]t is art alone which can succeed in objectifying with universal validity what the philosopher is able to present in a merely subjective fashion . . . . Philosophy was born and nourished by poetry in the infancy of knowledge [20]

2. That phenomena may appear from natural laws (which are part of Ideal reality) without conceiving phenomena as comprising a second world. This point allows for a discussion of the Plato of the Romantics and whether the Romanticized Plato might be a modification of Plato or an exploration his proto-Romantic aspect.

What I call the Romantic return to Platonism is both a correction to Empiricism and a progression from Kant. Coleridge's polar diagram shows the major difference between Romanticized Platonism and Plato's scheme in the Divided Line as the elevated place of imagination in the former. The table shows Plato's Divided Line above Coleridge's harmonic polarity of the mental powers that he sketches out on the inside back cover of a copy (now in the British Library) of Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie*, volume VIII (see Appendix A, below). He calls this schema, 'The simplest yet practically sufficient order of the Mental Powers' (*Marginalia* V, 798; Appendix A, below). I propose that Coleridge's scheme modifies Plato's Divided Line, developing a Romantic scheme from Platonism.

In the tables or scales drawn in his Tennemann, Coleridge sketches the order of mental powers twice, in opposite directions, emphasizing the harmonies between the poles.[21] This relation of Coleridge's scheme to Plato's Divided Line has not been previously made in the secondary literature, nor was it mentioned as related to the Divided Line by Coleridge, but I believe it is an important tool in both showing and exploring how Coleridge fashions his Romanticism out of a proto-Romantic Platonism. Coleridge finds Platonism in need of modifications, such as the elevation and redefinition of the imaginative faculty, in order to become appropriate for an anti-empirico-mechanistic, post-Kantian Romanticism.

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[21] The harmonies in Coleridge's polar system are well explained in Barfield, 2006, 127-130.

1.2 Modifying Plato to Romanticism: Coleridge's Plotinian direction

Plotinus's modifying the Platonic understanding of imagistic representation prompts and prefigures the Romantic direction, strongly influencing Coleridge. Plotinus quietly passes over Plato's imitative theory of poetic-artistic representation, proposing his own theory that poetic-artistic creation springs from the same forming principles, or laws, as nature itself.[22] Plotinus argues that the aesthetic contemplation of art and nature leads beyond merely discursive reason towards the Ideas, or forming principles. Hence:

> Sense-perception is our messenger, but Intellect is our king. (*Ennead* V, 3.3)

He does not reject outright Platonic *mimesis,* but reserves it for imitative art producing dim and feeble copies, or *eidola*, as so many 'toys not worth much' (*Ennead* IV, 3.10).

He aligns painting and sculpture with dancing and mime as arts of outward appearance in contrast to music's higher art, which conveys forming principles:

> But if any artistic skill starts from the proportions of [individual] living things and goes from there to consider the proportions of living things in general, it would be a part of the power which also in the higher world considers and contemplates universal proportion [*logos*] in the intelligible. And certainly all music, since the ideas which it has are concerned with rhythm and melody, would be of the same kind, just like the art which is concerned with intelligible number.[23] (*Ennead* V, 9.11)

He also raises architecture and carpentry above painting, sculpture, dance, and mime, because these productive arts are based on the Ideal principles of proportion (*Ennead* V, 9.11). Moreover, they do not aim at appearance alone. Their models are Ideal, creating the purposes, functions, and essential properties, of buildings, beds, etc. Here he echoes Plato's notion of the carpenter's bed being less removed from reality than the doubly mimetic bed of the painter (*Republic*, Book X, 596-8).

Plotinus maintains that his position continues the spirit of Plato, and this is genuine even when Plotinus advances his Platonism in ways that might seem to contradict Plato to some readers today. Audrey Rich collates Plotinus's material that describes his distinctly *Neo*-Platonic contribution to aesthetics (Rich, 1960). The Plotinian artist works to no material model, but contemplates the Ideal and its seminal principles. Rich cites Plotinus' example of Pheidias, whose celebrated Zeus statue showed no human model, intending, rather, to convey how Zeus might manifest himself (Rich, 235). Thus,

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[22] A. H. Armstrong translates *logoi spermatikoi* (which Plotinus adapts from the Stoics), as 'forming principles', Stephen McKenna as 'reason-principles', and also as 'seminal reasons/principles'.

[23] *Logos* also means musical ratio/proportion. Hence, supremely developed artistry unites one with a contemplated music of the Forms.

for Plotinus, art contemplates Ideas and gives them aesthetic expression. If this formula seems to prefigure Kant's aesthetic Ideas, it should not be surprising to find Kant using a very similar example to illustrate his notion: Aquila, Jupiter's eagle, with 'lightning in its claws', aesthetically expresses divine power, and thus an aesthetic Idea conveys the rational idea of 'the sublimity and majesty of creation' (*CJ*, §49, 183).

Plotinus's model of *poiesis* is less one of imitating appearances than of creatively paralleling its subject's reason-principles. The artist draws together the model's objective principles, and uses them to create an imaginatively generated artwork with a different material setting. However, we should not force this notion of artistic creation as parallel creation, because for Plotinus:

> an uglier living man [is] more beautiful than the beautiful man in a statute (*Ennead* VI, 7.22, 30-31)

Nevertheless, we can see that in his view, artistic production is more imaginative than imitative.

Some will consider it erroneous to judge Plato's statements regarding imagistic reproduction and stylization as referring to what we, and Plotinus, call art, because Plato did not have our concept of 'Art'.[24] Nevertheless, art has existed as a practice philosophically considered from Plato, through Plotinus, to Coleridge's theory of the imagination, and all three (with other perennial philosophers between) contemplate poietic (Gk: *poiētikos* creative, from *poiētēs* maker) principles beyond those required for skilfully depicting outward forms. The division that Platonism conceives between skilfully depicting appearances and poietic intimation of non-sensible intelligibles repeats a dynamic tension already present in Plato, and heightened by his more dramatic and poetic passages. The most relevant to consider here is when Socrates is seduced from his wonted urban environment to follow Phaedrus beyond the city walls and discourse along the river bank between a cypress and a plane tree.

Socrates is seduced by the chance for philosophical discussion as Phaedrus holds the scroll of a speech on love recently given by Lysias. Yet to the proposal to discuss this in the countryside, where he fears his reason may become enchanted by river nymphs, he objects:

> the landscapes and trees have nothing to teach me, only people do. (230d)

[24] See Kristeller, 1951, which presents the still widely misrepresented and modest thesis that art for the Hellenics was not exactly the same as our modern, eighteenth-century-devised system of painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry.

Nevertheless, Socrates is persuaded beyond the city walls, where we witness his transition from clever, cool logic to an elevated logos inspired by his daimonic warning sign. His initial argument offended the gods by favouring the instrumentally rational, worldly non-lover over the divinely inspired lover. After a repentant act, he begins afresh, now arguing for a spirited love, a divine madness akin to poetry and prophecy. The *daimon* that chided his first, too-coldly-logical, speech therefore inspired his paean to love and poetry. Here we have the proto-Romantic Plato of Schelling, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley, which Romantic reading the next chapter will proceed to elucidate in terms of Plato's model of thought and knowledge and Coleridge's modification thereof.

1.3 Plato's Model of Thought and Knowledge

Before I can outline how I see Coleridge developing his Romantic Platonism from a proto-Romantic Plato, Plato's theory of the mental powers must first be surveyed. Plato's model of thought and knowledge, often implicit, becomes most explicit when he directly discusses epistemology. In the *Republic*'s Analogy of the Divided Line; the *Phaedrus*'s Analogy of the Chariot; and Diotima's *anabasmoi,* or Steps to Love in the *Symposium*, Platonic epistemology and ontology are presented simultaneously. The *Theaetetus*, in contrast, pursues the nature of knowledge more purely, because the epistemological discussion is here abstracted from an ontological setting and other theoretical concerns. It is Plato's purest epistemological exploration. The argument progresses through Socrates playing midwife to the young Theaetetus in seeking to clarify what knowledge is and is not.

The dialogue considers three theories of knowledge: as mere perception; as true judgment; and as true judgment with an account – the famous 'justified true belief' (JTB) theory of knowledge.[25] Firstly, Socrates criticizes Theaetetus' Protagorean, relativistic theory that knowledge is perception. He objects that holding contradictory perceptions and opinions as equally valid, truth would disappear for us. Without truth there could be no knowledge, therefore it could not be true that knowledge is perception.

Knowledge is next considered as true judgment, but this is also dismissed, because one might by pure luck be possessed of a true judgment without being able to distinguish it from false beliefs. Eventually, the definition of knowledge as 'true judgment with an account' is found unsatisfactory, because defining 'an account' as 'knowledge of the distinctions of the thing to be known' makes the circular argument that 'knowledge is knowledge'.

The *Republic*'s Divided Line passage is a simple but profound rendering of Plato's epistemology as it relates to his theory of Forms ontology. This passage may thus be

[25] Despite Gettier 's (1963) statements to the contrary, Plato never accepts justified true belief (true belief with an account) as the formula for knowledge, and Socrates clearly dismisses it in the *Theaetetus*. Gettier says in a footnote that 'perhaps Plato accepts JTB in *Meno* 98'. However, against Gettier's reading, the Socrates character says that 'there is a difference between right opinion and knowledge' and that this difference 'is not at all a conjecture with me but something I would particularly assert that I knew: there are not many things of which I would say that, but this one, at any rate, I will include among those that I know' (*Meno* 98). Later, the *Republic* holds *pistis*, or belief, to be a different species than knowledge (*pistis* is *doxa*, not *episteme*), whether that belief be true or not. *Dianoia*, or theoretical understanding, is presented as thinking that provides conceptual accounts, but even that is deemed an insufficient form of knowledge compared to *noesis*. It is unfortunate that Gettier's false account is still too often glibly cited.

read epistemologically and ontologically. The Divided Line represents four stages towards knowledge: from shadows and reflections; to the visible three-dimensional things that cause these images; through concepts abstracted from these, and mathematical notions refining these concepts; to knowledge of the Forms, the only true knowledge.

Read epistemologically, the Line moves from *aisthesis* and *doxa* (sense perception and belief) about *eikasia* and *pistis* (images and opinions relating to perceived objects), through *dianoia* (logical reasoning and scientific, abstracting, empirical approaches) involving *mathematika* (mathematical concepts and empirical generalizations), and finally to dialectical or contemplative knowledge of the Forms. Following the epistemological direction, the line starts from shadowy acquaintance with images. It then moves through common sense belief and opinion regarding perceptions. Next, conceptualization and empirical generalizations produce the schemata required by science and the technical arts. Finally, through dialectic and sustained contemplation, is *noesis*, or rational intuition of the Forms, and ultimately the Good, the Form of Forms.

Read ontologically, the movement is reversed, as knowledge and being are two aspects of one polarity. In the ontology there is no laborious, diachronic ascent towards knowledge through stages. Being's unfolding from the Good beyond being is immediate and simultaneous, inspiring Plotinus's metaphor of emanation from the One. To read the divided line ontologically is to see it model reality and its appearances, with reflections and shadows cast into corresponding levels of mind.

Our usual thinking traces backwards from what is most obvious and apparent (phenomena) to what is not phenomenal at all, and is the source of appearance. We usually infer truth from appearances. Thus we move inductively from appearances to concepts and rules. In the order of being, however, Plato's dynamic moves the other way: from the higher forms, through mathematical and then empirical concepts,[26] to physical objects and then their images, shadows, and reflections.[27] From sun, that is, to shadow. While the epistemological movement can properly be described as having the

[26] It is debatable whether or not Plato includes concepts and hypotheses in the order of being.
[27] Cf. Galen, *On the views of Hippocrates and Plato*: 'In the *Philebus* and the *Phaedrus*, he [Plato] shows that for the constitution of the technical arts, the theory of division and synthesis is most necessary, and he recommends that one should be trained in it in two ways: *by descending from what is first and most generic to the things that are no longer susceptible of division, by means of the intermediary differences,* by which he had shown in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* that definitions are constituted, *and contrariwise, ascending from the many most specific things to the first genus, via synthesis*. For the path is the same for both, but the journey is twofold, going alternately from one of the first things to the other.'

movement or progression outlined because the transitions between epistemological states described therein are necessarily temporal, the ontological movement should be understood only metaphorically as movement and transition, because what is being described is not truly susceptible to chronological treatment, being synchronic reality, and not a temporal and incremental ascent to it.

No doubt Plotinus understands this, in delimiting his concept of emanation as metaphorical. I find my view that emanation as a description of the appearance of the sensible world from the intelligibles and ultimately, or rather originally, from the One is metaphorical, to be supported by Plotinus himself, and my reading him thus is supported by recent scholarship by Emilsson and the considered opinion of Armstrong. That Plotinus intends the language of emanation metaphorically is supported at *Ennead* VI 4-5, where, as Emilsson (1994, 88) accurately describes, he:

> goes very far in rejecting the language of emanation and even that of reflection as mere metaphors liable to mislead us.

In his Introductory Note to *Ennead* VI, 4-5, Armstrong (*Ennead* VI, 1988, 271) also says that for Plotinus:

> the unity and omnipresence of spiritual being . . . leads to a powerful critique of emanation-images [in VI, 4.7], which makes it clear that for Plotinus emanation was an inadequate, though necessary, metaphor.

Emanation means a spreading out from, so when we use this English to translate Plotinian *próodos*, we must always be aware of the chronological import in the spreading out connoted in using the word. Indeed, Plotinus's own use of *próodos* also brings with it a connotation of temporal, diachronic proceeding. Although unavoidable in expression, however, Plotinus cautions that any implied chronology in his descriptions of emanation is purely metaphorical. Plotinian emanation, or *próodos*, is atemporal. Even talk of it being a process is metaphorical. The transcendent X that it describes, however, is for Plotinus and many philosophers perhaps before him and certainly since, a reality and no metaphorical invention.

By the English word *emanation*, in this context, we really wish to say something like: X, whereby X = an instantaneous something that is neither an effect, nor an unfolding, nor an emitting, nor phenomenally understood or imaged emanation (e.g. water spouting from a showerhead; or light rays irradiated by a star). Reflections, to mention another Plotinian metaphor for *próodos*, are phenomena, and they also have a

chronology, although we do not think about the diachrony of emitted and reflected light in our everyday dealings, tending to think loosely of light transmission as instantaneous.

The Platonic and Plotinian distinction between the sensible and intelligible is not metaphorical, but its expression, conveyance, and explanation is. The term emanation, to reiterate, is metaphorical, but not what it intends and ultimately denotes in Plotinus's contexts. *Próodos*, and English equivalents like emanation, proceeding, and spreading out are the inevitably metaphorical expressions of what itself is no metaphor but ultimate reality.

As Emilsson glosses, Plotinus says that he uses unavoidably diachronic images of emanation, such as reflection (and we can add to that images of radii stemming from a hub, and so forth, also employed by Plotinus) because language, accustomed as it is to describing phenomena, cannot say anything clearly and unambiguously true about ultimate reality beyond the bounds of experience, as Kant later argues, but from within a different philosophical frame or priorities. But where Kant says we cannot take concepts seriously when they attempt to proceed beyond phenomena, Plotinus implies that this is where we should be very serious, and must eventually proceed in contemplation beyond how far concepts can convey us. In such discourse, we can now say the phrases *as it were* and *so to speak* to qualify almost every word we use,[28] when we wish to be scrupulously truthful and avoid misconstrual.

Reflection, to return to the example, is an image that usefully goes quite far in conveying Plotinian emanation, or *próodos*, or rather what he means by it, but it only goes so far, and the analogy breaks down, as do all others. Any phenomenon is chronological, and hence any image employing a phenomenon (and there is probably no other kind of image we can use here, especially when the purpose is to convey the intellectual by reference to the sensible) will break down after taking us so far and only so far. By which time or point, however, the reader, or listener should be able to discard the imagery, it having served its useful but limited purpose. One would, nevertheless require metaphoric imagery to communicate reality to people who do not grasp that phenomena are not the only reality.

The terms Here and There that Plotinus uses now need explaining. Discussing appearance and reality, and the many and the one, someone might say, 'Here, my friend, is where the terms *Here* and *There* come into their own'. Two philosophers discussing

[28] As Plotinus employs '*hoion*' ('as if', or 'so to speak') in Ennead VI.8.13.

the truth of this or that meaning, construal, disagreement (or some other point involving the use of language and imagery to convey intended meaning) illustrate talking *within* Plotinus's sense of *Here*. What they are talking *about*, however, is what is *There*. Much or what we say about There is prone to being misconstrued because we must employ words and phenomena in our images to attempt to convey what is beyond phenomena, and even 'beyond' is used metaphorically here. Using the adjective 'metaphorical' about the words we use (Here) to describe reality does not imply that the ultimate referent (There) is a figment of fancy or imagination.

Such a figment is involved in the expression, however, and the communicant approaches the metaphor-carrying image under the communicator's guidance. When this mirage is reached, the figment should be taken for what it is: something no longer needed but which helped the mind concentrate and progress. By this stage, the communicant has drawn that much closer to becoming a contemplative of what is There, and is beginning to appreciate the aletheic limits as well as the pedagogic uses of terms like Here and There.

Forms do not become concepts, then objects, and then images, in Plato's system, although concepts and phenomena (veridical or confused) depend upon the Forms. Thinking about thinking about being (epistemology), with Plato, involves studying ever-closer approximations to truth from shadowy acquaintance, through doxic and conceptual comprehensions, to *noesis*. Thinking about being (the exercise of ontology) will always be off balance, and external to where it intends to be, because it is thinking about being instead of being it. This is so until, that is, *noesis* is attained, and the contemplation of the Idea unites with the Idea contemplated.[29] Whereas a concept is a class of thing separate from the thing itself, providing philosophers with the epistemological gap, such a gap does not exist, according to the theory, between the Platonic Idea and its apprehension or contemplation.

As with Plato, Coleridge's writings are much concerned with thinking about thinking. Coleridge's typology of thought from fancy, through lower and higher understanding, then imagination, and finally to reason provides a model that I read as a Romantic recasting of Plato's scheme outlining epistemological development from *eikasia* to *noesis*. Plato's model is a polarity between perceiving changeable images and

[29] 'Idea' troublesomely translates *eidos*. 'Form' is no better, both words having familiar, but in this context irrelevant, English meanings. Platonic Idea is not a purely mental occurrence, as when someone 'has an idea'.

thinking stable intelligibles. Thus he conceived a disparity between sensible objects in flux and stable universals. Coleridge's scheme similarly conceives a polarity between Ideas and phenomena.

In Coleridge's system the intelligible Forms include, besides Plato's *eide*, natural laws as non-phenomenal reality. For example, in gravitation, gravity itself is never seen, it is a Law, not a phenomenon, yet it gives rise to phenomena such that understanding the law helps to understand the phenomena. The understanding (*dianoia*) can grasp and apply the Law (as a hypothesis thought descends *from*), but only contemplative or imaginative reason can think it as ultimate reality, as Idea (as what thought proceeds *towards*).

'Plato treats principally of the truth, as it is manifested at the *ideal* pole, as the science of intellect', Coleridge notes, whereas Bacon applies himself, 'to the same truth, as it is manifested at the . . . material pole, as the science of nature.' Coleridge is impressed that Plato writes of 'Living Laws', and that Bacon terms, 'the laws of nature, *Ideas*' (*Friend* I, 492). By including laws, Coleridge thus provides a refreshing view of Plato's Theory of Ideas, appealing to those engaged in a mathematical study of the laws *behind* phenomena that could not themselves *be* phenomena.

While in Plato affinities between *eikasia* and *noesis* are neither obvious nor elucidated, in Coleridge the harmony of sense and reason becomes a central topic. Indeed, Coleridge holds that reason is detectable in sense, although this is not self-conscious reason, and his examples of this include illustrations of reason sleepwalking in nature, such as instinct being reason asleep but stirring. Hence, for Coleridge:

> Plants are Life dormant; Animals = Somnambulists; the mass of Mankind Day-dreamers; the Philosopher only awake. (*Friend* II, 75, n.3)

Like Plotinus, Coleridge appreciates the traces of reason in the phenomena of *aisthesis.* Such harmony may be implicit in Plato but is not discussed by him in his extant writings. I have not surveyed Plato's Academic successors, or the Middle Platonists, or the Neo-Pythagoreans, to find such discussion there, but it certainly appears in Plotinus. It is not surprising that Coleridge the contemplative Romantic poet expressively explores this harmony as he poetizes sense experience to unite with philosophical concerns.

Many might remain unconvinced by the assertion that Plato believed in a harmony between *aisthesis* and *noesis*. Indeed, in the *Timaeus* myth, Plato presents an ultimate

failure of harmony between *ikhnê* (traces of the Forms) and the *khôra*, a mysterious entity between the intelligible and the sensible about which debate is still vigorous,[30] and which the character Timaeus describes as 'a receptacle for all becoming, a sort of wet nurse' (*Timaeus*, 49b).[31] Primal *Anangkê* (necessity, brute fact, the given) is ordered, through *ikhnê* (traces of Forms), by a demiurge. Crombie says that *Anangkê* is correctly translated as *necessity*, but because the word connotes to modern readers 'logical necessity', or 'the force of reason', which is in fact the very opposite of what Plato seems to mean, Crombie suggests that 'the given', or 'brute fact' is a more appropriate translation.

That Crombie uses the phrase 'brute fact' to translate a word that he says is correctly translated by that phrase's opposite, 'necessity', is justifiable, but also highlights the need for care here. Crombie does not mention that *brute fact* is understood as *contingency*,[32] nor that care must be taken in using these terms because contingency is the opposite of necessity in some important uses of that latter word. I think that Crombie's sense of *Anangkê* as brute fact can be conveyed less graphically, because more abstract, but without the ambiguity I identify, with the formula 'contingent necessity'.[33]

Contingent necessity can then be explained by Crombie's illustration of the carpenter planing timber with two senses of reason: (1) his reason for planing is because he has a purpose for smooth wood, and (2) the wood, in his plan, *needs*, or *has necessity of*, planing by reason of the wood's natural contingent necessity in being rough and crooked. This second reason is a brute fact, a given, and inexplicable in the final analysis because only further contingencies can be stated, in terms of molecular analysis, for example, but without any final why (Crombie, 216). So, Plato tells us (via Timaeus telling Socrates) of 'things made by the craftsmanship of reason', which we can take to refer to the Forms, in which sensible things and we participate, before moving to 'that which comes about through *Anangkê*'.

Timaeus describes brute fact, or contingent necessity recalcitrant to reason, as a 'wandering cause', which Crombie insightfully glosses as moving around and about without rhyme or reason (216). My thesis argues, and most fully in Part Four, that

[30] Agamben (1999, 218), for example, calls it 'nonplace', Crombie 'space' (1979, 216).
[31] Significantly, Socrates rests after his disquisition, the *Republic*, and is entertained with Timaeus's account, the *Republic*'s sequel. Timaeus then proceeds not exactly with philosophy, but with a likely story (*eikos logos*, 29d).
[32] For readers familiar with Sartre, this can be understood as basically equivalent to *facticity*
[33] Cf. Anscombe (1958), arguing that so-called brute facts are relative to institutional practices.

ordinary life illuminated and guided by reason, such as occurs after serious reflection on our usually taken-for-granted, usually unexamined, pursuits and enjoyments, is the correct goal of all good practice. Serious reflection on and questioning of our tastes and preferences, and our often unreflected-upon directions is therefore a prime desideratum for aesthetic education.

Aesthetic education itself is thus the most important aspect of an education that is to bring out the best potential in people and to elucidate the best that is available for communities, because this conscious elucidation of usually obscure and unreflected directions in taste and in general pursuits is available to all, and not only to philosophers. The general availability of reason can be intimated through attention to the sensuous objects and media under examination in the light of reason clear and available to all, which is readily admitted once intuited, or grasped, as Socrates and Kant both argue, and in which force of reason their unfailing confidence lies.

From this position I will suggest, again in Part Four, and because further ground is yet to be covered, an *ars biographica poetica*, or an art of poetic living as life-writing, that is as writing life in the fabric of life. The end of this *ars biographica poetica* is contemplation of the Good and of ultimate values through which communities are cultivated and lives are lived through appreciating, enjoying and more-fully consciously respecting rhyme and reason in a way that is both guided from without and poetically created from within, that is to say, imaginatively. Before the circle turns to that point, then, we return now to Plato in the *khôra.*

Although the demiurge in the Timaeus creates a more or less intelligible cosmos, an intractable element of *Anangkê*, or inexplicable (given) and contingent necessity, remains in sensible objects and in our feelings related to them. The particulars of this contingent necessity cannot be collected, or universalized, under rational general terms that serve to explain their being and their properties. Strong hints of harmony between Platos's *eikasia* and *noesis* exist in the *Symposium*, where Socrates refers to *anabasmoi*: the stages or steps in the myth he recounts that Diotima told him in initiating him into the profoundest mysteries.[34]

There, Beauty is distinguished as a chink through which the intelligible Forms illuminate the sensible presences, giving the shimmer of the Ideal, as Plotinus later expresses it. The Forms are intelligible, not sensible, yet Beauty adds a shimmer to the

[34] *Anabasmoi* means *steps*, denoting the philosopher's long ascent to Beauty itself.

brute, given, sensible. This shimmer, which becomes pulchritude ('that which pleases on being seen') for Aquinas (1956, 77-79), is, Plato tells, through Socrates, through Diotima, through the Eleusinian Mysteries, the aesthetic, sensual first step progressing through love of wisdom, and the contemplation of order, genera, virtues, laws, higher purposes, and then the vision of Beauty resplendent in itself and by itself, next to Truth and indicating the Good.

The story's retelling itself exemplifies Diotima's lesson. Socrates is described in his youth. If he was ever handsome, it was then. The old woman is wrinkled, with grey hair: not a typical beauty in Classical Greece. Yet young Socrates hangs on her words. Diotima is unsure if Socrates can assimilate the sacred lesson. The youth, enthralled by the old woman, learns from the beauty in her story that ascending to contemplate unseen Ideals is to progress towards an Ideality far greater than the erotic beauty that prompted and provided the first foothold on the ladder.

1.4 *Eikasia*

Eikasia is acquaintance with the world as image. This is the state attending to the *eikones*, composed of colour, shape, sound, and other sensations taken at face value. As such, it is naïve; Plato calls it a state of ignorance. *Eikasia* is neither true nor false, being derived from *aisthesis*, our raw aesthetic experience. The sophist in *Theaetetus* claimed this *aisthesis* to be all that there is to knowledge. In some ways a classical counterpart of Hume, Theaetetus, influenced by the theories of Heraclitus and especially Protagoras, argues that the only possible knowledge is what can be apprehended by the senses.

We can think of *aisthesis* as cognition based only on images, and as an intuitive process that occurs prior to existential judgment, considering no reality beyond its own feelings. *Eikasia* is the beholding of images, and is fixated on images in dreams, memories, reveries, or reflections, shadows, and painted, poetic, or other likeness. *Eikasia* is fixated insofar as it never considers the image may be merely the image of something else, because for *eikasia*, the image is the only 'reality' and therefore reality is not a category it ever thinks about.

There is discussion in the secondary literature debating whether *eikasia* is an illusory misapprehension of the images of things for the objects themselves, or whether something different is supposed to be going on. Hardie suggests that *eikasia* means 'conjecture' in general, so that people in *eikasia*, like the prisoners in the cave, make conjectures and likely stories about what is going on, without necessarily making conjectures regarding any supposed originals the existence of which accounts for the appearances (Hardie, 61).

I read *eikasia* as similar to Heidegger's fascination (*Faszination*): immersion in the inherited and unquestioned concerns of everyday life ([1927] 2008, 149). In *eikasia*, we are held by the appearances and by the images. The scintillation of surface beauty, and the unreflective acceptance of superficial meaning can pull the mind into this level where one becomes caught up in concerns without looking to the reality beyond these appearances. The charms of *eikasia* involve *phantasia*, the accepting of images and appearances woven into stories, carefully described by Coleridge as the 'willing suspension of disbelief that constitutes poetic faith' (*Biographia* II, 6).

There is neither truth nor falsity in *eikasia*, but rather a kind of reverie. In this dream-like state, what appears are *gignomena*, the things which tumble about between being and not being. *Eikasia* in *Republic*, Book VI has a broader reference than the *aisthesis*

discussed in the *Theaetetus. Aisthesis* in the *Theaetetus* is a 'passive affection of the mind' (184-7), and refers to sense impressions, whereas *eikasia* refers to sense impressions of images, and also to mental images, such as those experienced in dreams, delirium, and madness.

Eikasia's objects are shadows, reflections, dreams, and human productions of likenesses: a painting of a house is a *mimema*, conveying 'a sort of dream created by man for those that are awake' (*Sophist,* 266c). *Eikasia* takes images at face value, whereas *pistis* takes everyday objects and opinions about them at face value. *Eikasia* is a primitive, pre-conceptual experience. *Noesis* is an advanced, praeter-conceptual experience. Everyday understanding, as well as the understanding of science and mathematics, lies between these epistemic extremes. Within Coleridge's polar scheme is a harmony between sense and reason such that reason exists unconsciously within *eikasia*, which for Coleridge becomes sense and fancy.

For Coleridge, there is reason in sense, although this reason is 'sleeping' or 'dreaming'. It is difficult to express this meaning clearly, and that obscurity is at least part of the Romantic point. Modifying Plato, Coleridge's Romantic scheme sees reason not as the absolute opposite to sense, but rather as its harmonic opposite. Describing the harmony from the other perspective, now looking for sense in reason, is easier because the Platonic understanding of reason at the end of dialectic is of a direct intuition without the mathematika, the conceptual intermediaries. For Coleridge: sense intuits phenomena; reason intuits Ideas. For Plato: *noesis* intuits Ideas; *dianoia* imagines, or mentally images, Ideas, employing geometrical diagrams, hypotheses, etc., never reaching them directly .

Coleridge's sense of the harmony between *aisthesis* and Idea allows for a Romantic impression of the artist as working through and with Ideas while simultaneously remaining within the aesthetic, sensory pole of *eikasia*. This Romantic Platonism is familiar by now, and an example can be seen in Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912). This example alludes to Plato's *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, describing the *eidos* of beauty as accessible to sense as well as to intellect. In the novella, von Aschenbach, a famous author, hopes to recuperate his staid passions and tired mind with a vacation to Venice. A beautiful youth, Tadzio, fascinates his imagination, and while on the beach, fully dressed in his suit and hat, the author, having contemplated the Forms of Beauty, Life, Joy, and Goodness in the classically beautiful youth before him, believes he is being beckoned by these transcendences in and through this boy. As

Aschenbach dies, the youth points to the sea, thus alluding to the *Symposium*'s ultimate aesthetic-epistemic vision, described by Plato as:

> drawing towards the sea of beauty, and creating and beholding many fair and noble thoughts in boundless love of wisdom; until at length he grows and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere. (210d)

Because Coleridge's Romantic Platonism highlights the harmony between sense and reason, he can have an explicit account of how the Idea can bring pleasure through aesthetic expression, and how the artwork can inspire intellectual enjoyment. This account can support the argument in the *Symposium* that beauty is an *eidos*, yet one that can be seen by the eye as well as by the intellect.

I suggested a sense of *aisthesis* or *eikasia* can be detected in Heidegger's 'fascination', the state of being held captive by the everyday comings and goings and the common interpretations of history, reality, and morality found around us and taken for granted. *Eikasia*'s unphilosophical stance is equally an example of the unexamined life. This mode unquestioningly accepts moral codes as ready-made values, accepting them at face value. This stage is therefore pre-ethical, despite working with apparently moral ready-mades. The condition of the prisoners in the cave, described in the *Republic* just before the Divided Line passage, outlines the trapped, fascinated, aspect of *eikasia.* The prisoners are fascinated by the shadows on the wall and have no intellectual tools to criticize their own perspectives and theories of reality.

For Coleridge, this sensory flux is then further dispersed by the fancy, as it generates streams of association. Plato and Coleridge both stress the impermanent character of the objects of consciousness considered at the naïve pole of experience. Plato opposes the relativistic position that knowledge can only come from and be of the objects of the senses. Coleridge thus argues against the modern Empiricism of Locke, Hume, and Hartley, a position he describes as held by those who:

> alike pre-assume, with Mr Locke, that the *Mind* contains only the reliques of the *Senses*, and therefore proceed with him to explain the substance from the shadow, the voice from the echo: they can but detect, each the others' inconsistencies. (*Statesman's Manual*, 111)

The sophist in *Theaetetus,* as much as the Empiricists in and preceding Coleridge's day, often argues that the only kind of knowledge possible was that of the senses, and the only possible object was the phenomenal object that Plato describes as the object of *eikasia*, whose object is the polar opposite of the Idea approached in *noesis*.

While Plato and Coleridge argue against Empiricist positions, Plato diminishes the importance of the sensory along the pole of knowledge on his Divided Line, whereas Coleridge Romanticizes this scheme to show that a harmony can be detected between the poles. Coleridge thus finds intimations of reason in non-discursive aesthetic experience, and in the intuitions of reason he finds the immediacy usually associated the sensible.

1.5 *Pistis*

For Plato, *pistis*' objects are things made by God or humans: animals, plants, and artefacts. These are distinguished from shadows, reflections, dreams, painting, and other images. *Pistis*' objects are the things of the ordinary world considered apart from their reflections and other images of them.

While *eikasia* is fascinated, docilely accepting all with neither prejudice nor concern for contradiction, *pistis* is characterised by judgment. The judgments of *pistis* arrive at *doxa,* or opinions, by the process of 'the soul debating with herself,' affirming and denying (*Theaetetus,* 190a). This process is akin to the presence of (unenlightened) negative reason in the lower understanding of Coleridge's scheme. Although *pistis* arrives at judgments by comparing and relating perceptions, it does not subject these to any critical analysis.

Indeed, in the *Theaetetus,* this mode of *doxa* is said to contain both an element of *aisthesis* and an element of pure thinking (194b). The counterpart of the element of *aisthesis* in Coleridge's lower understanding, which I take to be Coleridge's counterpart to *pistis*, are the fixed and definite thoughts fashioned by the fancy and associated from the stream of sense. For Coleridge, these fixed and definite units of thought work like pre-concepts, or counters: pebbles from the stream of sense experience from whence they were lifted.

Within Plato's scheme, the inclusion in *pistis* of the principles of affirmation and denial, corresponding to the presence of negative reason as the principle of contradiction in Coleridge's lower understanding, the categories of reality and unreality arise in distinction to the level equality of unprejudiced experience in *eikasia.* The prejudice and existential affirmation necessary for judgment arises in *pistis,* thus completing the dynamic of *doxa*. Within *eikasia,* distinction between reality and unreality is impossible, since no appearance is judged according to anything else. Eikastic presentations are, on the other hand, constantly subject to associative relations to other phenomena, none of which are distinguished in themselves as being either objective or subjective. Objectivity requires the judgment to distinguishes subject from object, perception from perceived, quality from qualified, and this is lacking in *eikasia*.

Pistis' judgments include much empirical knowledge. It judges *a posteriori*, asserting that this follows that without necessarily involving any theoretical framework or thinking as to why something is the way it is or follows the process it does. *Pistis* is pragmatic, as in the farmer who has true opinions regarding when to sow and when to

harvest coming from *a posteriori* judgments. Such opinion may well be true, by accident or experience, but is unconcerned with theoretical accounts.

Aisthesis/eikasia presents the qualia that the Empiricists would later call secondary qualities. The secondary quality is neither more nor less than exactly as it appears, being pure appearance. On the other hand, *pistis* makes judgments, requiring experience in dealing with the objects. Hence *pistis*, being object-directed, obtains a level of objectivity not present in *eikasia*. This objectivity deals with objects relative to purposes and points of view. When grasping the object in its objectivity is the goal, then the thing is set apart by measuring, counting, and weighing (*to metrein kai arithmein kai istanai*: *Republic*, 602d).

At this point, we leave the level of *pistis* and progress to *dianoia*. Thus the object becomes amenable to *mathesis*, that is, it can be taught and learned according to its *mathemata* rather than only be experienced according to its *pathemata*. By postulating an object set apart from the subjective experience of it, these measurable and calculable qualities allow for the possibility of affirmation and denial; for the judgments of truth and falsity; and for those of reality and unreality.

Pistis segues into *dianoia*, with the experiential counters of actual entities in our ordinary world of sense-perception being exchanged for intellectual, empirically abstracted concepts derived *from* pistic experience to enable the level of thought specific to *dianoia*. To experience the entities of *pistis* as actual objective entities in distinction from the presentations in *eikasia*, wherein the objective actuality or not of something corresponding to the presentation is not considered, requires a degree of thought which becomes refined in *dianoia*.

1.6 *Dianoia*

The genealogy of *dianoia* is apparent not only from *pistis* but also from *aisthesis/eikasia*. Plato suggests, in his Divided Line, that as *eikasia* dreams of actual objects which are forever beyond its ken,[35] *dianoia* dreams of being (*Republic*, 476c). *Dianoia* is a way of thinking and knowing that has been built up from earlier stages. Following the Divided Line thus far from ingenuous, imagistic consciousness of shadows, reflections, and other images towards higher mathematical reasoning and *ergon logistikou* (602e), then dialectically approaching Ideas, we see an epistemological theory of consciousness developing from the unstable ground, or so it appears, of sensation. Plato's epistemology is the main focus while Socrates explains the Divided Line to Glaucon,[36] but it is secondary to his ontology, which moves in the other direction, i.e. from the Form of the Good, then the Ideas,[37] then material objects, and ending in reflections, and shadows, which, as the ontology shows, do not really provide a ground at all.

Following the divided line epistemologically, moving from naïve consciousness to empirico-scientific and mathematical thinking, everything seems to be constructed from the empirical ground of sense perception and its appearances, which are omnipresent and dominant in *eikasia*. Thus far this epistemological model is being built from the ground up, from sense perception, through conventional, 'animal faith' beliefs and opinions, to conceptual and mathematical thinking in *dianoia,* before the movement toward the Forms and the Form of the Good in *noesis*. Thus far, Plato shows no chance of a mystical access to Ideas with a capital 'I' from some secret world behind the scenes.

For Plato, the philosopher may contemplate the Forms, and the Form of the Good, only after long progress through necessary stages. The chained prisoners cannot reach the Forms by some lucky guess extrapolating from the shadows and echoes that constitute their world. As argued in the *Theaetetus*, any lucky conjecture could not be known as to be true, because it would possess in itself no principle to differentiate true

[35] It is *pistis* which grasps actual objects in its waking, workaday way.
[36] Here Socrates and Glaucon seek the best method of education, so the attainment of knowledge is the foremost topic here.
[37] I think, though this is controversial, that the *mathematika*, being hypotheses, exist only in the epistemology, as transitional constructs, and are not emanations (or any other kind of beings) in his ontology. If correct, this might help explain why the divisions of *dianoia* and *pistis* are the same length on the line, and that this sameness is deliberate.

from false conjectures. True belief backed up with an account is therefore not knowledge.

Plato contends that before knowledge is reached, we must progress from the *phantasia* of imagery in *eikasia* to the confidence of everyday dealings in *pistis*. From here, the first step into knowledge thinks through problems with concepts and mathematical forms. *Dianoia* is, literally, thinking through, but instead of thinking the Forms directly, it uses the diagrams given by representational concepts and geometry. Hence, *dianoia* is a form of *episteme*, but remains a shadow of *noesis*. Coleridge retains this slow build-up towards knowledge in his model, working up thinking from sense and fancy, through the higher and lower understandings, until reason, the counterpart of *noesis*, is reached.

When it comes to achieving self-conscious reason, Coleridge is cautious, saying that the progress is slow, with unavoidable steps along the way. However, Coleridge adds a Romantic concern with his distaste for divisions made merely in order to distinguish (*Reflection*, 33).[38] His aim, then, is not to create a clear-cut faculty psychology but to present a dynamic model emphasizing the faculties' all-in-each aspects. Hence, there is sense in reason and reason in sense, and the work of fancy, understanding, and imagination run throughout, though in different degrees of consciousness. Whether a particular instance of thought is to be considered understanding or imagination depends on what aspects are conscious and what remains unconscious. Thus he makes room for the Romantic notion of a presentiment of mystery and beauty, of truth and the Forms, that is accessible, though unreflectively so, through sensory and aesthetic experience.

Plato is too-often misrepresented as an idealist arguing that matter is an illusion and that everyday concrete objects are merely shadows cast by the Forms. This misinterpretation follows a shallow reading, especially of the Prisoners in the Cave allegory. Our understanding (or rather pre-understanding) while in states of *doxa* (*eikasia* and *pistis*) is indeed 'shadowy', but the objects of opinion and belief are not always mere shadows (although they are sometimes literally shadows), they are indeed material objects (or their external images, including shadows).

In the *Timaeus*, Plato describes the demiurge as using the Forms as models to create an ordered world out of the chaos of matter that preceded the cosmos. Although

[38] Coleridge notes that the converse, distinguishing in order to sow division, is yet worse.

in this creation myth, a creation of order, not a creation *ex nihilo*, the demiurge employs the Forms of the Platonic solids, built up from triangles, to order the world, the matter thus ordered was already in existence. The same matter exists before and after the ordering. The Platonic point that is often confused is that the objects of sense-experience are material, but because they are and always coming-to-be and passing-away, they can be understood to be less real than the laws and Ideas responsible for their essential patterns and appearances.

Think of a small eddy in a river. It is fascinating to observe, perhaps calming even. Imagine a naïve passer-by who finds it so alluring, so beautiful, that they want to take it home. They try to catch the eddy in a bucket and are disappointed when in the bucket all they seem to have caught is still water, while the eddy remains swirling just downstream of the rock in the river. Of course the eddy is a material phenomenon, manifested only in material fluids. But the matter in which the eddy is manifest is something quite interchangeable and inessential.

To really know the eddy, the observer needs to appreciate, first by induction, through observation, the commonalities in such patterns of liquids and gasses. From this the essential features can be separated from the interchangeable. Observations, conjectures, experiment, concept-building all work together until what one is really thinking of are no longer particular instances. What one approaches in getting to know the eddy are not less-vivacious sense-impressions (memories), nor hieroglyphic images working as conceptual counters, but Ideas.

Knowing the eddy eventually amounts to knowing the bodiless, invisible laws or principles that Plato calls Ideas, which obtain even when the material to instantiate those laws is absent. To the question, would the law of gravity (and the laws resulting in the Coriolis Effect governing eddies) still obtain were all mass annihilated, the Platonist would answer that it would. This amounts to understanding that the laws responsible for phenomena are not themselves phenomena. Plato argues that because these laws, or Forms, are originary and eternal, they are the reality that phenomena indicate. To understand this, focus on the thought that the eddy essentially has more to do with the laws governing how fluids behave when a solid partially interrupts the flow, than with the particular matter that instantiates the eddy phenomenon at any one time.

The eddy is a possibility whose laws always obtain, even if the phenomenon is, at any particular time, nowhere instantiated. What accounts for this eternal factor (the ‘always’ in the possibility of the appearance’s coming-to-be) is the set of laws or

principles that account for (epistemologically) and are logically and chronologically prior to and responsible for (ontologically) the phenomenon.

A ground-up reading of Plato's Divided Line as epistemological progression understands 'ground' as the starting position of the experiencing subject commencing the journey to knowledge (*episteme*) from interconnected imagery (*eikasia*). 'Ground', in this context, cannot mean something foundational, that is to say logically originary, because the originaries, or *archai*, are the Ideas or Forms themselves, which are the starting point when the Divided Line is read in the other direction, ontologically, the direction that Plotinus later calls emanation.

The epistemological reading, which is the way Plato primarily intended the Line to be read, given the context in the discussion on education, describes the path to knowledge by perceiving subjects who have the ability to reason. The epistemological reading retains sense perception, belief, and opinion as early stages, but proceeds beyond them. This is what Coleridge also does when he retains the theory, but not the conclusions, of the Mechanists and Associationists (such as Hartley and Locke) within the lower levels of his broader scheme.

As Plato sees sense-perception and opinion as gathering a store of images and recognizable objects and patterns which are then operated on by deduction and abstraction into mathematizable concepts that can be processed in the absence of their phenomenal manifestations, so Coleridge acknowledges the place of the empirico-associationist account of conceptual knowledge being built up from the ground of experience through sense awareness.

The mechanisms of sense-perception and association are not disputed by Coleridge, but are retained as the mechanisms of sense and fancy, the pre-rational processes of re-arranging impressions which can be then worked into concepts, allowing for thought processes about general events and object-kinds in the absence of both the phenomena and the memories of the phenomena. Up to this point in the essentially parallel schemes of Plato and Coleridge, there is nothing that Protagoras and Theaetetus (representing the relativism and empiricism of Plato's day) or Locke and Hartley would contest.

Coleridge's system is synoptic. In a sense he is a traditionalist and a hoarder, loathing to abandon what has been and still can be useful. In his twinned essays on Bentham and Coleridge, Mill (1840, 214) describes the 'two great seminal minds of England in their age.' Mill continues,

> Bentham was a Progressive philosopher, Coleridge a Conservative one . . . To Bentham it was given to discern more particularly those truths with which existing doctrines and institutions were at variance; to Coleridge, the neglected truths which lay in them. (Mill, 1840, 214)

Mill criticizes Bentham for his 'want of imagination', and finds Coleridge, as Skorupski (2014) glosses, 'less superficial, more insightful'. Where Bentham always asks of antique or received opinion, 'Is it true?', Mill finds Coleridge's hermeneutic depth more appealing, as the latter asks, 'What is its meaning?' Where the one calls to abolish the old institutions, the other aims for their true realization, 'reasserting the best meaning and purposes of the old.' This appraisal by his later contemporary would have appealed to Coleridge, who writes,

> I regard truth as a divine ventriloquist: I care not from whose mouth the sounds are supposed to proceed, if only the words are audible and intelligible. (*Biographia* I, 164)

With his accreting and correcting synoptic system, Coleridge can retain empirico-associationist mechanisms to explain (1) memory formation; (2) how concepts can be initially shaped as abstractions; and (3) how fancy can occur in poetic works and fevered brains. Associationist explanation could be retained from the levels of sense to conceptual understanding without retaining Empiricism's metaphysical and epistemological conclusions, such as Hume's that aesthetic and moral values are merely projections of pleasurable and painful sensations; that knowledge is nothing more than sense-perception; or Aquinas's Aristotelian dictum, central to Locke, that 'there is nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses' (*De veritate*, q. 2 a. 3 arg. 19), which Coleridge could only accept with Leibniz's (1765, Bk II, Ch. 1) codicil, '. . . except the mind itself.'

In the same paragraph, Leibniz subtly tells how Locke's position is self-contradictory in that this exception of the mind reflecting on itself presents something mental that does not originate not in the senses. In discovering this inconsistency in Locke, Leibniz can therefore argue that his own anti-Empirical position 'concurs substantially with Locke's *Essay* which attempts to infer many of the ideas from the reflection which the mind undertakes upon its own nature.' Earlier in the same work, Leibniz (1765, Preface) highlights Locke's contradiction, made in Book Two of Locke's *Essay*, where the British Empiricist:

> admits . . . that ideas, which do not have their origin in sensation, must come from reflection. But reflection simply means focusing upon what is already in us; the senses, however, do not furnish us with what we bear within us. If we accept this, we can surely

> affirm that our spirit contains a great deal that is innate, since we are innate to ourselves, so to speak.

The mind's native potencies and potentialities become for Coleridge the human side of reason, dynamically manifested as energies of thought yearning for fulfilment in contemplating both Ideas to direct our living ends, and the Laws that govern phenomena. He argues, then, that the presence of reason to the lower understanding is the human mind first awakening to reason. Prior to this, reason is present, but we are not awake to its presence. The universal applicability of the law of contradiction impresses the mind with the force of reason. The point is that the law of contradiction is understood as being neither inductively derived from experience, nor formulated from concepts abstracted from sense perception, and yet it is universally applicable.

He argues that a mind's being impressed with this logical, universal applicability that is not derived from experience constitutes a dawning moment. This is the moment the understanding ceases to be mere understanding. Coleridge argues that an appreciation of reason's scope and force slowly, and at first negatively, awakens in us. On the other side the Empiricists argue that not only a conceptual armoury but also the logical techniques of wielding it are fashioned and evolved out of sense perception and its traces.

A recurrent theme in Coleridge is that natural laws have an objective, ideal nature. Laws of nature account for phenomena, without themselves being phenomena. Coleridge therefore asserts that he subscribes to:

> the doctrine of Ideas, or Knowledges that are supersensuous and yet truly Objective (*Marginalia* V, 776)

As such, they lie behind, as it were, phenomena, being prior to them in the order of thought rather than appearances. Laws as objective realities, like gravitation, yet obviously not phenomenal, like apples, can help argue to the mind of empirical, scientific bent the reality of a fundamental order of being that is non-phenomenal, and thus evading the Empiricist's net. For Coleridge, this opens the door on the physical side for understanding natural laws Platonically, i.e. as objective, universal, and effective Ideas. Hence Coleridge points out that Plato sometimes refers to Ideas as 'living laws' and that Bacon, in the *New Organon*, sometimes describes his notion of natural laws as 'living Ideas' and, very often, as 'Forms'.

Returning to my example of the eddy, when the observer notices general effects, such as warm and cold water eddies swirling in opposite directions, and those directions

reversing according to hemispheric location, the classification of evidence, the application of concepts, and the generation of theories remains within the sphere of *dianoia*, or for Coleridge, the higher understanding. When the thinker stops taking the axioms and concepts for granted, and inquires into their logical foundations, then the dialectical movement to *episteme* begins.

Plato's first example of a science exemplifying *dianoia* is geometry (*Republic*, 510c-511b). Geometers assume hypotheses rather than investigating them, because the hypotheses of geometry cannot be used to investigate themselves. Coleridge follows Plato here, writing in a footnote that:

> In works of pure science the definitions of necessity precede the reasoning, in other works they more aptly form the conclusion. (*Friend* I, 177n)

In a footnote to this footnote, Coleridge continues with what reads like a perfect gloss of *dianoia*'s theoretical constructs (the *mathematika*):

> In the severity of logic, the geometrical point, line, surface, circle, and so forth, are theorems, not ideas. (*Friend* I, 177n)

Besides geometry, Plato's other examples of sciences reliant on and remaining within *dianoia* are arithmetic, harmonic theory, and astronomy. Plotinus adds architecture and carpentry. *Dianoia* creates technical subjects, treating of its various fields with abstracted concepts and visual aids, derived from the objects in *pistis*, which are to be understood in terms of number, space, and time. Arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy are therefore taken to be the highest sciences subject to or accessible to *dianoia*.

Dialectic takes the study a stage further, working from hypotheses towards the Forms themselves and their first principle, the Form of the Good. *Dianoia* is the form of all ratiocination until one reaches the Forms. It is therefore the method we have to use in both the upward/inductive and downward/deductive path. Dialectic is a method, and *dianoia* the cognitive faculty that uses it.

In its dependence on images, *dianoia* resembles *eikasia*:

> These very things they are forming and drawing, of which shadows and reflections in water are images, they now in turn use as their images and aiming to see those very things which they could not otherwise see except in thought. (510e)

Not examining its first principles, *dianoia* cannot reach beyond its hypotheses. Hence while people in *dianoia*:

> dream about reality, it is yet impossible for them to see the waking vision while they use assumptions which leave these topics (geometry and what follows from it) undisturbed, for they cannot offer an explanation. You see, where the starting point is not known and the end and what comes between is woven together out of what is not known, what means are there that such a set of premises can ever become knowledge? (533c)

A difficulty in this presentation is that the Simile of the Divided Line is itself a conceptual model, and therefore an example of *dianoia*, with its respective insufficiencies. At the beginning of the Divided Line passage, Socrates tells Glaucon that:

> There's certainly a great deal I'm missing out . . . I think there's quite a lot . . . Anyway . . . I'll not miss anything out on purpose. (509c)

In practice, then, the Divided Line is a pedagogical model that uses *dianoia*'s schematizing capacities to explain the four major epistemological faculties.

Dorter (1996, 290) proposes that Plato's Divided Line was a 'disappearing ladder' that 'vanishes as soon as we try to grasp hold of it'. He proposes that Plato is aware of the shortcomings in presenting a conceptual schema to explain a theory that itself indicates the epistemological limitations of theoretical models, abstracted concepts, and images. I add to Dorter that Plato's demonstrating the limits of schemata and images with a schematic image is too perfect an irony for it to be a mere shortcoming of which Plato is nevertheless aware. This irony, it seems, is itself material presented for philosophical reflection. Just before the Divided Line is described, Socrates asserts that what follows is his best opinion, and not knowledge. Plato's use of poetic description and conceptual models to indicate (rather than fully explicate) philosophical positions that involve the praeter-conceptual leads authors such as Hare and Perkins to write about 'two Platos' or 'the Other Plato'.

We do not, however, need two Platos once we recognize that his models and poetic descriptions continue where *dianoia*'s concepts alone cannot progress. The *Republic*'s opening phrase,

> I went down to the Piraeus yesterday . . .

is traditionally interpreted as an important metaphor of the philosopher descending from contemplation to pursue educational duties.[39] The opening movement would thus allude to Socrates' return from *noesis*, through *dianoia*, *pistis*, and *eikasia*, that is, to the

[39] This traditional allegorical interpretation of the *Republic*'s first line occurs in the fourth preliminary of Proclus' commentary on the *Republic*'s sequel, the *Timaeus*.

prisoners in the cave. Socrates' return has an educational goal, namely to try to teach from his philosophical perspective in a way that can nevertheless be understood, or at least approached, through the lower epistemic and imaginative levels. The aim is to educe a desire from the audience to make the ascent for themselves. As much as the Sun cannot properly be described to lifelong prisoners chained to stare at shadows, true knowledge, and its perspective, cannot be transmitted to the student in its own terms.

Socrates, in this educational role, has to use the tools of *eikasia*, *pistis* and *dianoia* to indicate a truth and perspective beyond those levels. It is fitting that this descent back into the cave is made in the *Republic*, a political work primarily on Justice, one of whose main theses is that the philosopher, even though inclined to remain apart from the political mainstream in order to contemplate the Forms, has a duty to go down and educate – draw out – the inhabitants of the cave of models and shadows.

1.7 *Noesis*

As *dianoia* was described as descending from assumed hypotheses towards conclusions, *noesis* begins from the same hypotheses but ascends towards the first principles, through the Forms and ultimately to the principle of the Forms' unity: the Form of the Good. *Noesis* is not content to take for granted any concept, diagram, or hypothesis just because it is practically useful.

Brumbaugh (1991, 102) asks,

> In what sense . . . is the Platonic form of the good 'non-hypothetical'?

He then answers for Plato:

> It is so in two important ways. In the first place, it must actually (not merely hypothetically) exist as the cause of attraction we feel toward 'the good.' The notion that the actual and evident attraction which the good and its allied forms exert on us (which we experience as 'desire') could be itself the effect of something which was not 'actual' is rejected by Plato. There does seem a legitimate analogy here between 'attraction' in a physical and in a psychological field; if we find very strong lines of force, we assume that there is something *actually* (not just possibly or ideally) causing them; and analogously, the attraction of the good testifies to its actuality.

Although perhaps unpersuasive to many modern readers, this line of argument offers the Form of the Good as the ideal substantive. The second sense in Plato's describing the Form of the Good, and all subsequent Forms, as non-hypothetical is one that Brumbaugh suggests is very logical:

> In the second place, the good is non-hypothetical because *any* use of reason presupposes it. We may hold that every general proposition we know is merely probable, only an hypothesis; yet we still assume that the best hypothesis is the truest, that our hypothetical method is a good one, and that what is reasonable is also what is real.

I add a third sense of the Good being non-hypothetical. Any discourse (including those of *dianoia* with its empirical, experientially abstracted concepts) will include the notion of a definitional standard used as a rule against which the appropriate use of any term can be judged. Plato holds that *dianoia* employs these pragmatic standards in its use of concepts, but *noesis*, at least when pursued as dialectic, makes its business the examination and contemplation of these standards themselves as ideals or perfect models. In this way, *noesis* approaches first principles. From this point, *noesis* is in a position to do two things.

Firstly, the noetic thinker contemplates the Forms as a rational, architectonic unity, with each Form unifying its many participants, and all the Forms finding their unifying principle in the Form of the Good. The philosopher attracted to this contemplative ideal

must be compelled to descend from it if he or she is to educate others. As Plato has Socrates say:

> don't be surprised that those who go there [i.e. achieve this beatific vision] are not willing to engage in human affairs, but their souls constantly hurry upwards to spend their time up there (517c-d)

Although the philosopher must be compelled to descend from contemplation, this should not be an utterly difficult task, considering that the philosopher's noetic desire concentrates on virtue, i.e. the principles of the Good, and therefore intends the general good beyond the intellectual enjoyments of contemplation.

Secondly, therefore, the thinker in *noesis* may return from first principles to *eikasia, pistis, and dianoia*. Much of this insight-sharing, pro bono educational work necessarily involves allegories, because *dianoia, pistis,* and *eikasia* cannot progress if addressed solely at their own level; the living value within them must be maieutically educed. If concepts are given, concepts are returned; and the same goes for beliefs, conjectures, and images. Socratic dialectic must therefore proceed by showing contradictions that lie within the epistemic and doxastic levels preceding *noesis*.

Plato usually demonstrates *noesis* through dialectic. The participants typically try to define the meaning of a single term, usually a virtue with which they are professionally acquainted, such as courage, piety, beauty, friendship, and knowledge, and then proceed by illustrations, questions, and answers to Socratic cross-examination. The original definitions and assumptions typically lead to contradictions. Socrates then leaves his formerly self-assured companions to face their newly admitted ignorance. With the aporia now dumbfoundingly apparent, his interlocutors, if humble and sincere, become invigorated with a genuine hunger for knowledge. In the middle and later dialogues, this model continues to advance by a series of tacks, pushing against contradictions, eliminating hypotheses, and drawing towards necessities. This procedure follows the argument wherever it will lead.

So Plato describes noetic two modes: one proceeding positively to contemplate the Forms, the other proceeding at first negatively, using dialectic *elenchos* to reveal *aporia,* and fosters genuine intellectual curiosity, which moves toward ever finer definitions until first principles may positively be reached. It seems like Pato and Lato again, one in mystic contemplation, the other an analytic philosopher finessing distinctions and definitions. The dialectical mode is primarily governed by the law of contradiction as way of showing the self-evident *aporia* in assumptions and arguments.

Invariably, Socrates' procedure appears ironic, as if he is speaking in one realm, e.g. *pistis*, while thinking in another, *noesis*.

This Socrates often needs recourse to parables, similes, analogy, and symbol to convey noetic insights indescribable in the terms and counters of *eikasia*, *pistis*, or *dianoia*. Socrates must keep his inner eye on the object of *noesis*, and his outer, demonstrating focus on the respective theoretical development of those in the discussion. Naturally enough, Plato describes *noesis* as the 'eye of the soul' with its own objects, the Forms, appropriate to its own methods of apprehension (518-9). Plato says that the Form of the Good enlightens the soul, the 'eye of the mind' (533c) is 'sun-like', and those who have reached the goal 'raise the radiance of their soul and look at that that which brings light to all' (540a).

The notion of a part, or function, of the soul resembling the Forms appeals to the Romantics, for whom the Kantian critique holds hope for contact with noumenal reality. Kant's critiques, of course, disappoint by barring actual encounter with this reality for any rational creature whose cognitive encounters can only be of phenomena, the projected categories necessary for intuition, and the rational but subjective Ideas needed to regulate such intuitions. Post-Kantian Romantic thinkers, however, revise Kant so that the transcendental Ideas become objective, mind-independent, transcendent realities. Just as the ocular eye must be somehow sun-like if it is to see, reason must be Form-like, and resemble the Good, the argument goes, if it is to contemplate noetically. Coleridge quotes Plotinus on this point:

> 'how beautiful is the countenance of justice and wisdom; . . . in order to view it aright . . . the beholder should have made himself . . . similar to the object beheld. Never could the eye have beheld the sun, had not its own essence been soliform' (*Ennead* I, VI.4 & 9, in *Biographia* I, 114-5)

Coleridge parenthetically explains this *soliformity* as:

> (i.e. *pre-configured to light by a similarity of essence* . . .) (115)

Plato describes two modes of *noesis*, and Coleridgean reason corresponds to both. There is the mode of dialectic, examining propositions and definitions in dialogue, moving from hypotheses and aiming toward first principles, or the *archē*. The other, exalted mode of *noesis* is the contemplation of the Forms. This mode does not lend itself well to verbal description, and has been described, especially by the Neo-Platonists, as ultimately ineffable. Perhaps for this reason more than any other, Plato

had recourse to analogy, etc., stimulating him to write most of the poetic passages in the dialogues.

For Plato, the highest level of *noesis*, the end-point of dialectic, is beyond what can be put into words, and it can be induced, but not presented through dialectic. This is philosophy as *maieusis*, or midwifery. Plato affirms the ultimate ineffability of the *noemata* in perhaps the deepest single statement in his corpus, a superlative and utterly transcendent description of the Form of the Good. At *Republic* 509d10, Socrates asserts that,

> the Good is not being but superior to and beyond being in dignity and power.

The Good, which for Plato is the Form of Forms, is essentially ideal. It is not an existent being, but its reality is known through its power.

What is this power? There is a clue in a later dialogue, the *Sophist*, wherein the visiting Stranger is debating with the materialist Theaetetus, a bright young student of Mathematics and other higher studies, about materialism and anti-materialism.[40] The Stranger, championing an anti-materialist cause, proposes that he must only get his opponents to admit the reality of any entity, no matter how trivial, i.e., bodiless, in order to defeat the hard materialist position that the only things which exist are material bodies, or *somata*. Thus:

> If they can concede that there is something or other, even a trifle, which we can characterize as *asomata*, then that is already enough. (*Sophist*, 247d)

Here the Stranger invites discussion about what it is to be, and the notion that whatever *is* must have a power (*dunamis*) to effect, to exert a causal influence (*Sophist*, 247e). He argues that bodiless forms such as Justice, and their contraries, such as injustice, turn out to be powers, real movers, real and Ideal, whether adjectival or substantial. Justice, wisdom, and the soul in which they become manifest are realities that are themselves neither visible nor touchable. This clue from the *Sophist* shows Plato arguing that power is to be understood as a causal influence, so the power of the Good which surpasses being can be seen as an ideal, the contemplation of which has a real and pre-eminent power to influence reason, and hence choice, behaviour and ethical consideration. Beyond this position, Plato argues that the Forms themselves, and hence

[40] The Stranger from Elea has authority regarding wisdom. Plato sees Elea as the fount of Parmenidean monism. In Herodotus's *Histories*, Solon is a stranger who visits foreign places to disseminate wisdom, and this topos can be found in early and classical Greek literature. Culture-seeding by wise individuals is also a fascinating central thesis in Kingsley, 2003.

the law-like behaviour of the universe, are ultimately derived from, and find their unity and rationality in, the Form of the Good.

Comparing Plato's Divided Line and Coleridge's harmonic polarity provides a schema for appreciating how Coleridge Romanticizes Platonism. The assimilation of Platonism to Romanticism requires certain changes to allow a modified Platonism to fit well with the Romantic program. In Coleridge's scheme, *eikasia*'s place is given to sense and fancy. Plato's *eikasia* is often been translated as 'imagination',[41] and Plato accords it the lowest position, representing an insubstantial, illusory 'shadow-world' that is a state of virtual ignorance.

While Coleridge sets fancy at this level, he places imagination proper on the other side of the polarity, which in Plato would be the side of *episteme*. Coleridge places imagination above the higher understanding and below reason. Thus imagination, for Coleridge, becomes that art necessary for *episteme*, drawing down reason and its Ideas. Imagination's symbols allow access, in Coleridge's Romantic modification, to Ideas that remain inaccessible to the conceptual understanding alone.

Fancy, in the lower pole, is mimetic, aping shape and other properties accessible to sense. It alters by association, addition, subtraction, contiguity, similarity, inversion, and other basic operations that can be supported by the mechanical model. On the other hand, the Coleridgean imagination never simply produces with external shaping processes. It operates with a greater depth than that required for external and superficial shaping. Imagination creates towards a symbolic unity, manifesting principles and not merely resemblances.

Coleridge expresses this point about imagination in stronger terms, describing,

> the living *educts* of the imagination; of that reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the reason in Images of the Sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the Senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths, of which they are the *conductors*. (*Statesman's Manual*, 29)

Reid (2006, 274) notes that these symbols are indeed the products of acts and energies, and that they should not be misconceived as reified relations and structures as though they were used allegorically, or as picture-language.

By the consubstantiality of its symbols, Coleridge means that imagination:

[41] E.g., Jowett, [1871] 1991, and Grube, [1935] 1980, although Reeve's revision of Grube translates *eikasia* as 'imaging' rather than 'imagination'.

> always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in the Unity, of which it is the representative. (*Statesman's Manual*, 30)

This higher role of imagination operates beyond the representational use of perceptions, memories, mental images, and fancy's recombinations. As such, Coleridgean imagination widely diverges from the Platonic scheme whereby imagination, as *eikasia*, is an unenlightened state of mind that takes the unexamined sensible appearances of the world at face value.

I maintain that Coleridge's higher imagination is a major contribution to formulating a Romantic philosophy. In this view, Romanticism modifies Platonism and continues the Neo-Platonic momentum. Neo-Platonism influenced the creation of Romanticism as a modification of Platonism. In his tract 'On the Intelligible Beauty' (*Ennead* V.8), Plotinus gently criticizes Plato's position on art as *mimesis*, while proposing a more originary model of poetic and artistic creation.

Elsewhere in the *Enneads,* Plotinus raises no objections to the doctrine of representation as *mimesis,* and even endorses the view. At *Ennead* V, 9.11, Plotinus classifies the arts and asserts that 'painting and sculpture, dancing and mime' are *mimemata*, i.e. mimetic arts that 'use a model perceived by sense'. Music is contrasted against these arts as higher in origin because its model is not something sensible but is rather the symmetry and order of the intelligibles. With music, perhaps surprisingly, Plotinus ranks also architecture and carpentry, because their use of necessary proportions connects them, without the intermediary of a sensible model, to Ideal principles.

The various connotations of the word *logos*, such as proportion, and musical relations pertaining to harmony, can help explain how Plotinus might have come by this interesting and I think intuitively appealing insight. The deductively provable axioms of geometry, key to architecture and carpentry, are emblematic of what Plato considers as *dianoia*-type knowledge, which conceptual knowing is lower than noeisis of the Forms, but is still *episteme* rather than *doxa.* To reiterate, *noesis* is to *dianoia* as *pistis* is to *eikasia*, thus the Divided Line represents a ratio of two ratios:

Noesis : *Dianoia* :: *Pistis* : *Eikasia*.

Noesis and *dianoia* are forms of *episteme*, whereby *dianoia* is hypothetical and *noesis* is contemplative, in my interpretation. Certainly *noesis* is anhypothetical knowledge, that

is, it cannot be deduced from other propositions, and is rather a direct grasp of first principles.

The different forms of knowledge and of opinion create their respective arts. Plotinus's ranking music, architecture, and carpentry as higher arts that model at least the *mathematika* (for example the axioms of Geometry) and hence rank as genuine knowledge, as opposed to painting, sculpture, dance, and mime does not contradict anything in Plato. Although in the Divided Line Plato places painting in the category of *eikasia*, along with natural images such as shadows and reflections, he does not mention anything of music, architecture, or carpentry in this passage. Nevertheless, on the argument that these arts derive from use of the mathematicals, we can see how they can be placed along the Divided Line as an application of *dianoia*.

On the same theme, but now much later in the *Republic* (in Book X), Plato compares the bed of the carpenter with that of the painter, and it is almost certainly this that Plotinus has in mind when he ranks carpentry as a higher art, next to music. While Plato argues that the painting is two removes from the *archē*, or original, of the bed, the carpenter's bed, which is itself the model for the painter, is only one remove from the 'Idea' of the bed. Plato says this Ideal bed is divinely made, and therefore a Form, *the* Bed, while the sensible-object bed of the carpenter is *a* bed, and though it may be a very good bed, it will inevitably fall short of ideal and universal perfection.[42]

I take the Bed passage to be a didactic analogy to illustrate the differences between originals and imitations, so that Socrates can maintain his argument for the censorship of poetry. This is an argument that the Romantics, especially Coleridge, would no doubt wish to modify, and Plotinus's modification regarding intelligible beauty would allow poetry, as itself using music, to have the status of noetic contemplation, and not merely that of *eikasia*, although its roots would still be in *eikasia*. Because aesthetic exploration and contemplation stem from the same forming principles as the object contemplated, the work of imagination can, according to Plotinus, lead towards ideal *noesis* just as mathematics for Plato leads to *noesis* without entering into it.

In Coleridge's system, sense (*aisthesis* in Plato) harmonizes with reason (*noesis*). While Plato's Divided Line is dynamic and may be read in both directions (starting from images reading epistemologically, and starting from Ideas reading ontologically),

[42] Plotinus avoids the problem of the Ideal Bed, and whether there are Forms of artifacts, by arguing that architects' and carpenters' products come from intelligible principles available to *dianoia*'s mathematical thinking, and not directly from the Forms.

Coleridge's model adds the further dynamic tension of polarity, and it is this which brings out the aforementioned harmonies. Thus Coleridge shows how sense rhymes with reason. Sense itself cannot be mistaken, although opinions (*doxa*) about it can, and sense and reason each have an intuitive immediacy that is absent from the levels in between.

Configuring the line (in his 'order of the mental Powers', *Marginalia* V, 798, and Appendix A, below) as a polarity, Coleridge dignifies sense by bringing out its affinities with reason. This move is significant in Coleridge's Romanticizing Plato. With a clearly polar harmony, reason can now be judged as more like its polar counterpart, sense, and less similar to understanding, despite understanding being a nearer neighbour along the pole. An appropriate similitude would be to say that Antarctica is more alike to the Arctic, its polar counterpart, than it is to New Zealand, its linearly nearer neighbour.

Coleridge's tweaking of Plato's Divided Line into a harmonic polarity also stirs some lines of speculative inquiry that appeal to the Romantic imagination. If reason is more present, although somnambulant, in sense than in understanding, we might ask if some Ideas can be intuitively felt in aesthetic experience, in *aisthesis*. Could this provide a way of framing an explanation of how moral and other non-sensible qualities can seem to be felt almost palpably?

Such questions pursue the aesthetic route to contemplating Ideas. Although Plato argues for dialectic as the best way to proceed to the Forms, there are other ways: prophecy; divine madness; love; contemplation of beauty. Dialectic is best for Plato because its method is transparent, requiring rational assent with every step. Aesthetic ascent also seeks assent, but the *yes* of pleasure is not the *yes* of reason. Being irrational, the aesthetic way can lose the intellectual sense of proportion (ratio), although it adds a balance of significant feeling towards the aspect of enjoyment in contemplation. Regarding the balance of aesthetic with intellectual agreement, one may assent to pleasure's affirmation only if that pleasure is felt, while, correspondingly, one may assent to reason only if that reason is understood.

Do pleasure and reason not both persuade towards their respective kinds of *pathemata*, of subjective experiences? As those who would proliferate their pleasure seek smiles, those who would have their reasons ratified seek nods of agreement. The Romantics seek higher truth and aesthetic-intellectual intensity in uniting deep feelings with profound thoughts. For Plato, poetry and heightened, spirited states of feeling can also ascend to the heights much as thought can. For him, however, poetry and

heightened feeling are of a lower value than philosophical thought because they are at best gifts, albeit divine gifts, that have been conferred gratuitously rather than hard-won through meritorious exertion of thought towards reason. Promethean, philosophy's greater value lies in its costing so much more, and though essentially incomplete, it is an excellence far harder-won than any more perfect gift that, though wondrous, comes at little or no human cost.

Plato's poetic descriptions exemplify and express, rather than explain, the ultimate convergence of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. But is poetry for Plato just a medium for indicating what he noetically encounters in purer form? Or, are Plato's poetic flights as necessary, or at least helpful, for his own ascent as they are for his students and readership? Poetry, love, madness, and prophecy can also ascend to the Forms, as Plato has Socrates argue in the *Phaedrus*. But they retain a sensuality, a lower soul (comprised by spirit (*thumos*) and appetite (*epithumia*, or the less noble *orexie*), but not *noûs*, the higher soul),[43] as he puts it, attached to sensation.

Is there an aesthetic access to the Good? Can people be good without being rationally so? To help illustrate the question within a familiar setting, we can see Kant answering it in the negative. For Kant, only a rational being can be ethical, because only a rational being can be free from the sway of sensuality and choose its own law, the moral law that is demonstrably non-contradictory if universalized. Hence only a rational being can have autonomy. Could there nevertheless be a dialectic of the heart? Or, a dialectic of the lower soul, of spirit and appetite? If so, could its dynamic be anything other than the heteronomous use of sensation by reason?

The heart does not announce its procedure step-by-step with logically connected propositions. But then, why should it? It is not the reason. Inasmuch as the mind may look down on the heart's apparent naivety, it cannot look down on its contradictions. The heart does not have contradictions, and this is because only propositions can contradict one another. The heart could just as well feel the mind's impotence and irrelevance to the experienced situation as the mind deduces the heart's seemingly incommensurable methods of finding the truth.

Coleridge's Romanticizing the Divided Line into a harmonic polarity provides a schema that expands Plato's model to accommodate some of Plato's own views on beauty. The divine madness that Plato describes in *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* is a state

[43] See, e.g., *Republic*, X, 602-5. This distinction is also made in *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*.

in which one 'intuits Beauty itself' (*Symposium*, 211E), inspired to this vision by the attraction felt towards the appearance of a beautiful person. The Romanticization of Plato is itself descended from Platonism, and is a call to listen to both sides at once, that is, to all in each.

The Ideas are not renounced as illusory, merely metaphysical, creations to be committed to the flames in favour of the purely phenomenal, as the Empiricists champion. The Romantic value of the Ideal remains, but it gains aesthetic nuance through Coleridge's powerful polar harmonization of sense with reason. Coleridge even moves Plato's *phantasia*, a large portion of *eikasia*, well above the division between opinion (*doxa*) and knowledge (*episteme*) and beyond *dianoia*, or the higher understanding, to become reason's intermediary, its nearest neighbour and ally.

We can pursue further this notion of reason rhyming and resonating in sense yet absent to the understanding. Disgust, aversion, revulsion, as much as admiration, etc., are aesthetic impressions that have an intuitively moral feel. However defeasible the knowledge claims in these experiences are, moral qualities in people's characters tend to be experienced as things felt. A person can be experienced as creepy, slimy, as Sartre ([1943] 1996, 610-2) analyses, shifty, chilling, as well as firm, dependable, and warm. Indeed, in the conviction of feeling, these qualities are taken for direct intuitions as much as when perceiving someone as tall, blond, or loud.

The harmony between reason and sense can also be recognized when we reflect that the intuitions of *aisthesis* are direct, because the objects are immediate. The red patch I intuit in sense is precisely as it appears, no more and no less. Whether or not it is a representation of something inaccessible to sense is irrelevant to saying that the red patch as such is exactly as it appears. This directness and immediacy of the state of mind to its object is a harmony between sense and reason in Coleridge's schema.

Whereas belief, opinion, and conceptual understanding involve an inevitable distance between the thing thought and the thinking, this epistemological gap does not exist in Plato's account of *noesis*. In *noesis*, the mind directly contemplates the Idea. Indeed, even that formulation implies a distance or difference that is not intended in Neo-Platonist accounts. For them, it is more accurate to say that in the act of contemplation ('vision', or *theoria*), the One (*to Hen*, Plato's Form of the Good), the Intellect (*Noûs*, constituting the Ideas), and the Soul (*Psyche*) unite. There is no Idea on one side with the thought of it on the other. This does not mean, however, that a Platonic Idea is an idea in the ordinary sense of the word, denoting something mental

that can only exist in a mind. Translating *eidos* with 'Idea' can lead to such mistakes, and the alternative translation, 'Form', is similarly prone to being misunderstood.

I have argued for a proto-Romantic Plato who is sometimes at odds with his own more linear, logical expositions, but I avoid supporting 'two Platos' readings. The proto-Romantic, poetic Plato is not merely an interpretation of Plato by the Romantics, but can be justified by tensions within Plato, and within single dialogues, between his poetic passages and his more straightforward expositions and discussions. Plato sees the need for a poetic vision allowing *aisthesis* to experience beauty as ideal and astonishing.

This position is most prominent in *Phaedrus, Symposium,* and *Republic* Book VII, and for some commentators it contrasts with his most thoroughly logical explanations and arguments in dialogues such as the *Theaetetus* and the *Parmenides,* and perhaps his Academy lecture on the Good, going on Aristotle's bemused account of it, when the audience expected an ethical theme and received a discussion of abstruse mathematics.[44] The poetry and the mathematics, however, do not seem so incongruous when we remember that the apex of Plato's system was the praeter-conceptuality of reality's Ideal referents.

Initially influenced by Plotinus, and with some details regarding symbolism developed from Procus's *symbolon* (see below, page 105 fn.), Coleridge shapes a Romantic Platonism that modifies imagination's place and role in his own system. For Plato imagination occupies the lowest level of thought, being a kind of fascination, whereas for Coleridge it represents the only form through which the mind can access Ideas, considered as intellectual objects beyond concepts. Coleridge develops the perennial philosophy, especially the Plotinian approach to Platonism, which runs through the 'spiritual, platonic old England' of the Renaissance Platonist Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton; the Cambridge Platonists Henry More and Ralph Cudworth; the 'English divines' such as Jeremy Taylor and Robert Leighton;[45] and the Romantics:

> Let England be Sir P. Sidney, Shakespere, Spenser, Milton, Bacon, Harrington, Swift, Wordsworth; and never let the names of Darwin, Johnson, Hume, *furr* it over! – If these too must be England, let them be another England / — or rather let the first be old England / the spiritual, platonic old England / & the second with Locke at the head of the Philosophers and Pope of the poets, with the long list of Priestleys, Payleys, Hayleys,

[44] Aristotle's account is recorded by his associate, Aristoxenus of Tarentum, the earliest-known Greek authority for music, in *Elements of Harmony,* II, 30–31.

[45] *Aids to Reflection* is a series of aphorisms and reflections on the intellectual, moral, and contemplative importance of reflection. Coleridge refers throughout to Archbishop Leighton's writings, which, Coleridge elsewhere says, exemplify a faithful and powerful concentration on 'the august objects of his habitual contemplation', *Letters* V, 198-9.

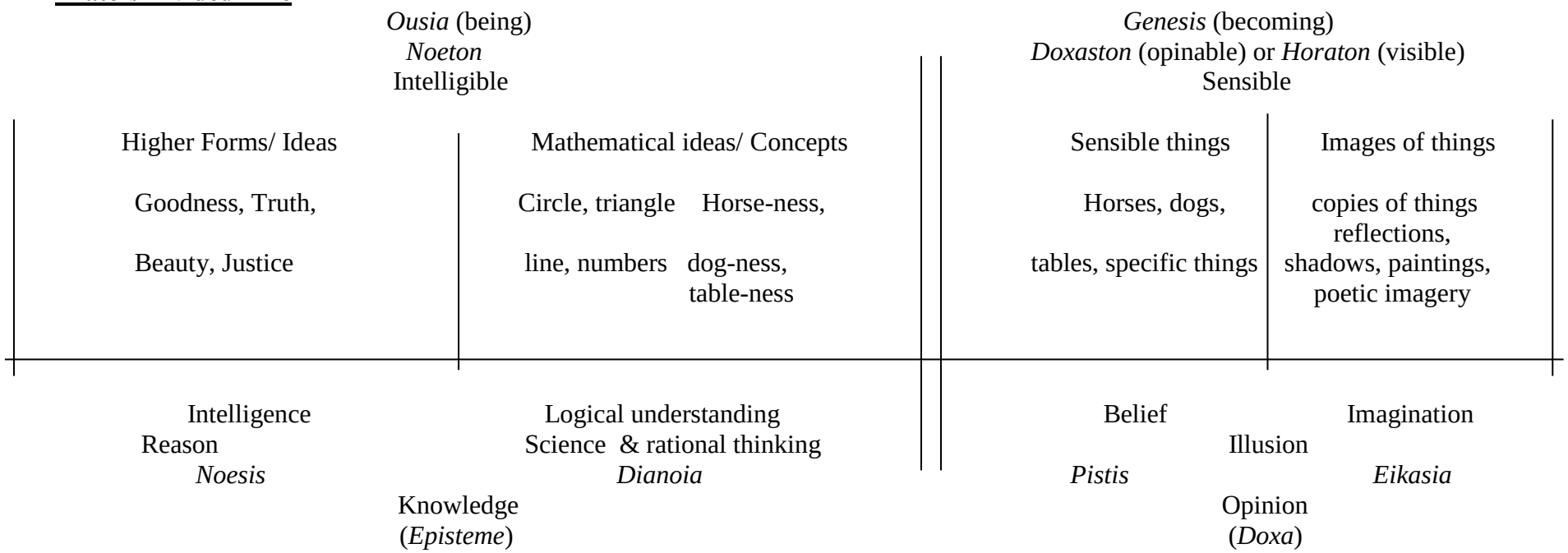
> Darwins,[46] Mr Pitts, Dundasses, &c &c be representative of commercial G Britain / these have their merits but are as alien to me, as the Mandarin Philosophers and Poets of China (*Notebooks* 2, 2598)

This Platonic strain argues that there is a universal *logos* discernible in the workings or laws of nature, as well as in the laws of thought and the thinkable, often challenging the concepts of everyday thinking, and leading its thinkers to contemplate praeter-conceptual principles and ideals.

[46] The Darwin is Erasmus, not his grandson Charles, who was not born until 1809, four years after this note was written.

Figure 1: Plato's Divided Line and Coleridge's Order of the Mental Powers

Plato's Divided Line



Coleridge's 'order of the Mental Powers' (see Appendix A)

Highest

Reason Imagination Higher Understanding ————Lower Understanding Fancy Sense

lowest

Sense Fancy Lower Understanding ———— Higher Understanding Imagination Reason

Part Two. Neo-Platonic, Kantian, and Coleridgean Ideas.

Part Two reads Coleridge's notion of Ideas as a Romantic development of Plato's Forms, interpreted through his reflections on Plotinus and Kant. I will situate my reading with reference to different traditional and contemporary positions and interpretations. I continue to advance the thesis that Coleridge interprets and recasts key Platonic notions to provide a philosophical framework for the Romanticism of which he was a first-generation founder. As Part One argued that Coleridge revises the Platonic scheme with regard to the nature and role of imagination, Part Two will show how he rethinks the nature and role of Ideas. For reasons of limited space, and because Plato's Theory of Ideas has been discussed in Part One, Part Two will commence with Plotinus's Neo-Platonic Ideas as our next step in approaching the important role that the contemplation of Ideas has in Coleridge's philosophy.[47]

Coleridge's Romantic system presents a dynamic philosophy of Idea, imagination and will. Elevating the role of imagination allows a reassessment of Ideas of reason to be made. This is mainly due to his re-positioning of imagination as a faculty through which Ideas could be reached not through empirically generated and abstracted concepts, but through symbols and metaphors that point beyond themselves. This pointing is not a pointing towards phenomena within experience, or of generalizations from experience, but towards that which explains and underlies phenomena, and is therefore not itself phenomenal.

2.2 Plotinus's Neo-Platonic Ideas

Reflecting on his studies, Coleridge says he 'soon found that [he] had read Plato by anticipation' (*Table Talk* I, 98-9, 31 March, 1830), having first read the Neo-Platonists. We will see how Coleridge Romanticized Plato via Plotinus in forming his philosophy. As Hedley (2000, 100) relates it, Plotinus 'uses conceptual reflection with the goal of reaching an *experience which transcends conceptuality*'. This careful attempt philosophically to approach and convey the praeter-conceptual is a central notion in the account of contemplation that I am developing in this study of Coleridge's thought.

[47] A chapter on what Ideas are for Plato has been written, and will be included in a later version of this thesis, developed for a book.

Despite contrary interpretations, I find reason to consider Plotinus as opposing Two-Worlds views as representing the ultimate and only reality.[48] My reasoning is similar to that pursued in the Indian Védānta (divine wisdom texts, comprising the most philosophical texts of the *Upanishads*) which hold that all is *ātma*, and there is, in the strictest and ultimate sense, no *māyā* (illusion or appearance).[49] I read Plotinus himself to express frustration that Plato's style could be taken as implying a separationist Two-Worlds theory.[50] Plotinus, like Plato, sometimes has things to say about different stages of epistemological progress, so he describes objects in sense, opinion, and conceptual understanding as Here, whereas *noesis* contemplates intelligible reality There.

An important note arises here concerning uncertainty. Eikastic, pistic (both are *doxa*) and dianoetic thought correspond to mediated, and not ultimate, reality. *Eikasia* being fascinated means it connects directly to what truly is; *pistis* having conviction in its objects and their events convince it of its objects' solid reality. Nevertheless, *pistis* also has a belief unavailable to *eikasia*, often superstitious, in invisible forces, be they natural, psychological, or supernatural. Unlike *eikasia*, *pistis* admits uncertainty, and its convictions can thereby be stronger or weaker. *Dianoia* more clearly comprehends and formulates is own provisional, hypothetical nature, and hence is aware of degrees of uncertainty.

As I read Plotinus, he says that when one noetically contemplates intelligible reality, one is There: returned or returning to a metastasis (Intellect) transcendent to mundane sensibles. This contemplation cannot be made *in* the One, because that would imply a reflective duality within the One.[51] The way I express my view on Plotinus's talk of Here and There might make *henôsis*, his term for mystical union with the One seem too easy, as if one simply has to switch gaze. I do not intend to make it sound so effortless, but then, effortlessness is not always so easily achieved. That said, I will later, in Part Four, consider the merits and limits of Daoist and other accounts that emphasise passivity, flow, being natural, and a striving for ataraxia.

The position I present regarding Plotinus's use of Two-Worlds language is embryonic, but I find reasons to develop it. These reasons I find in Plotinus, and in my

[48] For clear interpretations of Plotinus as a Two-Worlds thinker, see Menn, 2011; and Hathaway, 2002, which explicitly argue that Plotinus maintains a dualism of separate realms.
[49] For discussion, see ed. Gregorios, 2002, passim.
[50] See *Ennead* VI.5.8, quoted below, this chapter.
[51] There is scholarly debate as to what exactly happens in Plotinian mystical experience, and even whether it is rightly called mystical. Brisson for example, says it is not. Does the mystic achieve union with the One, or only with the Intellect? Hadot argues for the latter, and I agree, believing that *henôsis* is the experience of the part of soul undescended from Intellect.

own experience. In my late teens and until my early thirties, I had two, three, or four experiences that I find entirely natural to describe as mystical, and my every atom, thought, and tendency radiated effortlessly in all directions throughout the universe and either made, or made me aware of, profound interconnection. The interim periods of ordinary life seemed comparatively mundane, although they were enriched because of the intense experience irradiating through them.

Another occasion was not one of emanating from within, but of being touched, seized in fact, from without, as if by an intelligent ray of light, yet there was nothing visual in the experience. I responded attentively and emotively to its import, and wavered between fear, renewed confidence, and feeling comfort from that transcendent but connecting power. Other occasions were of a heightened sense of the repercussions of actions, even apparently minute ones, including acts of attention, discernment, and perception. They imparted an intense realization of the seemingly infinite significances and moral weight of how we comport ourselves to face, perceive, and act (and action includes thinking and spiritual movements here) with respect to our immediate surroundings; the wider, historical world; and the cosmos as metaphysically understood.

Ordinary life is transformed thereafter, but a normality returns, of lesser intensity than these extraordinary experiences. The gradual return to normality is now revealed, however, as a less intense mode of the connectedness and meaningfulness experienced in the powerful, elevated modes, and it is therefore difficult to count or separate mystical experiences, at least in the terms that my account suggests.[52] I suggest that periods of forgetfulness of the experiential intensity can be used to count extraordinary experiences one from another, but it seems that they are connected below the surface, and that ordinariness is like the sea that only apparently separates islands in an archipelago.

Like ripples, the experiences of universal connectedness felt closer to ultimate reality, but still a way off, and they impressed me with (a) the sense that I have much to learn; with (b), which is more profound, the reason to believe that there is indeed much to learn; and with (c) the conviction that it all matters, even in the apparently slightest details. Those experiences felt like they were the more real, and I therefore realised that the mundane experiences were necessarily a part of them. The ripple analogy still holds here, and I find coincidences with Plotinus's accounts: the mystical experiences are the

[52] N.b. I do not say I had *one*, two, three or four mystical experiences. If I were to talk about *one* experience, it would be to say that all of life's episodes are of one mystical experience.

wave crests of the liquid that is rippling, and the periods of mundane living are the plateaus.

Normality and ordinariness notwithstanding, the plateaus have their ripples too: fine, far-spreading, and shimmeringly beautiful. Moreover, there is nothing lesser about their substance and identity compared to the very same particles that rise with the ripples.[53] There are similarities between my account, and Plotinus's account of mystical experience, or *henôsis* (union with the One). Plotinus says,

> But one must go along with the words, if one in speaking of that Good uses of necessity to indicate it expressions which we do not strictly allow to be used, but one should understand 'as if' [*hoion*] with each of them. (*Ennead* VI, 8.13, 48-50)

I have no objection to my description of this experience or series of experiences being criticized. It struck me as very odd that most people do not talk about these experiences, because, I could not help thinking, surely everybody is part of it. Plotinus has the same thought when he asks,

> Why then, when we have such great possessions, do we not consciously grasp them, but are mostly inactive in these ways, and some of us are never active at all?

And he answers his own question, saying that most are too busy, never still. Indeed, he says,

> They are always occupied in their own activities, Intellect, and that which is before Intellect, always in itself, and soul, which is in this sense 'ever-moving'. (*Ennead* V, 1.12.1)

It seems now that in the lengthening plateau periods, one ought to be bringing up, educating and orienting, as Plato puts it, the Here where and when one is, and by that I mean not just one's children, students, neighbours, and community, but just as importantly, and often first of all, oneself, especially in terms of one's feelings, aesthetic sense, sense of humour, of enjoyment, desire, and fun, so that nothing remains that may escape the cultivating light of reason and thence be improved in the direction of the Good. This is how one prepares most generally for contemplation.

I hope this short personal account helps to explain some reason behind my position against separatist Two-Worlds interpretations of Plato and Plotinus, rather than crudely and murkily mystify it.[54] I have hardly mentioned these experiences before this

[53] Describing mystical experience, it is good to be reminded that one could say *as it were* and *so to speak* after almost every uttered word (even *and*, *in*, *the*, and *is*).
[54] This question approaches the heart of the two-worlds / non-two-worlds views that differently interpret existence and transcendence in Indian Philosophy, Plato, the Neo-Platonists, and even

dissertation. I always felt they were too holy, and that it would be blasphemous to talk of them unless proper respect and caution be given. I found an ally in Socrates, who Plato represents as praying, in the *Phaedrus*, not to offend the gods again before he discourses sincerely on love, after having first spoken of it only cleverly. There are many philosophical questions that arise from examining that attitude of feeling that it is not just insufficient, but apparently morally wrong, to talk lightly of something so awe-inspiring.

Two Plotinian features modifying Platonism influence – or are at least consistent with – the Romantic outlook. Firstly, the aforementioned account of poietic imagination in the *Enneads* surpasses Plato's theory of *mimesis*. Plotinus's dynamic, contemplative artist creates with the same Forms as nature itself. Dynamic, non-mimetic artistic creation also hallmarks Coleridge's Romantic organicism. For Plotinus, *poiesis* is a parallel creativity, rather than reproduction further removed from its model. In this Part (Part Two) I further discuss the role and place of imagination and the treatment of Ideas in Plotinus.

Plotinus's second modification of Platonism relates directly to his elevating art and imagination. In the spirit of the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, Plotinus accounts for accessing intelligibles through sense perception. Imagination, for Plotinus, is therefore the border (*methorion*) between the sensible and the intelligible. Thus Imagination [*phantasia*],

> possesses all things in a secondary way, and not so perfectly [unlike Intellect], it becomes all things, and since it is a thing belonging to the frontier between [methorion] the worlds, and occupies a corresponding position, it moves in both directions [i.e. between the levels of nature and Intellect]. (*Ennead* IV, 4.3)

Imagination thereby allows the aesthetic contemplation of Ideas. Goethe and Coleridge follow this path in their respective theories of symbolism. Moreover, the Plotinian notion of imagination as the middle position moving up and down between Sense and Reason is a direct ancestor of the Coleridgean imagination. Blake succinctly and compellingly represents contemplating the intelligible through the sensible:

> If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern. ([1790] 1994, 184)

Kant, and it bears deeply on the theory of contemplation that I develop in this thesis, and I cannot yet formulate a satisfactory and explicit position on the matter. This matter also, I believe, relates to Coleridge's semi-attraction to pantheism and his commitment to the Christian notion of divine transcendence mediated by Christ as incarnate Logos.

Likewise, Augustine pays homage to the beauty experienced in contemplation of the Ideal in and through the aesthetic world, which he calls 'all these things in my external environment':

> My question was the attention I gave them, and their response was their beauty ([398] 1991, X, vi, 9)

Plotinus's account of artistic creation distances itself from Plato's mimetic theory. He describes creative imagination as a process informed by the seminal principles relevant to what is contemplated. Addressing the forming principles of the object negates the separation, i.e. Plato's removes between subject and model. Plotinian *poiesis* parallels nature, rather than standing two or three removes from it, and thereby achieves genuine originality. Thus,

> music in the world of sense is made by the music prior to this world. But if anyone despises the arts because they produce their works by imitating nature, we must tell him, first, that natural things are imitations too. Then he must know that the arts do not simply imitate what they see, but they run back up to the forming principles, from which nature derives; then also that they [the artists] do a great del by themselves, and, since they possess beauty, they make up what is defective in things. (*Ennead* V, 8.1)

Coleridge agrees that genuine, original art participates in Ideas, thereby deriving value. He interprets his task as upholding this position against concept-giddy, utilitarian, empirico-mechanistic philosophy. Almost two centuries since *Biographia*'s publication, his project is still relevant today as high-profile conceptual art is displayed and applauded and the essentially axiological aesthetic presentation of the Ideal is derided. Ideas can only be presented aesthetically, according to the Plotinian-Coleridgean view, representing the universal in the particular presented experience. Thus,

> if anyone does really make according to wisdom itself, let us grant that the artists are like this. (*Ennead* V, 8.5.4-5)

Plotinus probably does not mean, however, that all artists always produce from wisdom itself. The beautiful individual, through which the Ideal is contemplated, is itself aesthetically contemplated in any particular artwork, and is appreciated as original. Diametrically opposed to aesthetic particularity, conceptual artwork is essentially substitutable. Not only are conceptual artworks substitutable, as when Tracy Emin's 'My Bed' was installed in Tokyo, New York, and London with different beds, it can also be conveyed by, say, a sociological essay without important loss of aesthetic

content and message. Opposing a sense of *poiesis* as conceptual rendering, Plotinus understands it as essentially praeter-conceptual and aesthetic.

Plotinian *poiesis* works from the inside out: extricating intellectual beauty into concrete expression, thus lending the physical object and its details an apparent necessity. Plotinian *poiesis'* unifying process foreshadows Romantic organicism. What Plotinus sees as an artwork's intellectual unity leads Kant to find in art purposiveness without purpose. Aesthetic response thus attributes unifying vision to such art. For Plotinus, an artwork's creative unity is internal, evolving from a principle, rather than being externally forced by a conceptual plan. The artist thus,

> goes back again to the wisdom of nature, according to which he has come into existence, a wisdom which is no longer composed of theorems, but is one thing as a whole, not the wisdom made into one out of many components, but rather resolved into multiplicity from one. (*Ennead* V, 8.5.5-10)

He explicitly signals poetry and music as authentic paths to contemplation and genuinely deep insight. The artwork's unity and beauty conveys that of the Intellectual Principle. Indeed any artwork for Plotinus is essentially a musical contemplation that appreciates beyond discursive concepts. The artist, and not only the Platonic philosopher, contemplates and conveys the Ideal. Schelling (1978, 231) extrapolates from this view, declaring art 'the only true document of philosophy'.

Through Plotinus, then, comes Romanticism's ideal of poetic wisdom. In Schelling art becomes the real driver of intellectual progress, working through philosophical stances produced through its concrete documents. These artworks are at once available to the senses and symbolic conveyors of Ideas. Coleridge describes,

> poetic wisdom [and its . . .] results and symbols of living power as contrasted with lifeless mechanism—of free and rival originality as contradistinguished from servile imitation . . . instead of a true imitation of the essential principles. (*Lit. Lects* I, 494)

Coleridge expresses the artwork's Plotinian internal unity in terms of organic form. Organicism first becomes a Romantic precept in A. W. Schlegel (1846). He then contrasts organic form with mechanism, with the latter forcing unity from without, while the former develops from internal necessity. Through imagination, the Coleridgean artist conveys Ideas of reason that are:

> essentially one with the germinal causes in nature. ('On Poesy or Art', ed. Shawcross *Biographia Literaria*, 1907, 253-63)

On the other hand, as he says in his 1812-13 'Lectures on Belles Lettres',

> The form is mechanic, when on any given material we impress a pre-determined form, as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form, on the other hand, is innate, it shapes as it develops from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. (*Lit. Lects* I, 495)[55]

Plotinus's first hypostasis, the One, corresponds to Plato's beyond being of the Form of the Good, or Form of Forms. By the same principle that the One is beyond being, Intellect, or *Noûs*, is being. Intellect is an emanation from the One, but this is not meant to describe any temporal procedure, and Plotinus states, at *Ennead* VI, 4 and 5, that the language and images he uses to describe emanation is metaphorical.[56] O'Connell (1963) elegantly states the problem that Plotinus addresses here as being that:

> we conceive of the relation of the superior world (which includes the soul, the ideas, and God) to the inferior world, in terms drawn from sense, in terms appropriate to concrete sensible reality and to the working of our imagination, rather than to intelligence in its genuine operation. Put another way, we do not draw our principles from the appropriate intelligible realm, but from the inferior, corporeal realm.

By the term *próodos* (progress, or proceeding), Plotinus describes the principle by which the One denotes the unity of the Forms, whereas Intellect denotes Forms considered in plurality, allowing for intelligible structure. Intellect's highest activity contemplates the One as the unity of the Forms.

Correspondingly, Soul is a further emanation, whose external activity is nature and whose internal activity is the affective and conative activity. As Intellect has its Forms, Soul has seminal formative principles: the seeds of things, or spermatic reasons, being the principles shaping nature (*Ennead* IV, 4.39.7). Despite speaking of Here and There, Plotinus is, I argue, no separationist Two-Worlds (or Three-Worlds, for he discusses the three hypostases of the One, the Intellect, and the Soul) theorist. Yes, on the discursive dianoetic level, there is the One, there is the Intellect, and there is the Soul, but on the level of ultimate truth, there is only the One, but even the word *is* misleads here. Plotinus explicitly denies separation, or *chôrismos*, and criticizes, as we will soon see, Plato's formulations that allow such readings. Plotinus reasons that,

> Nothing is separated or cut off from that which is before it. (*Ennead* V, 2.1.22-3)

[55] Paraphrasing Schlegel's definition of organicism: Schlegel, [1809-11] 2007, 340.
[56] Cf. Emilsson, 1994, 88.

Unlike a painting, which is separate, once produced, from its painter, Plotinian Intellect and Soul, in which subsists material Nature, are more like light from a torch: always connected to its source:

> just as the image of something, like the weaker light, if cut off from that from which it is, would no longer exist . . . these powers also which came from that first could not exist cut off from it. (*Ennead* VI, 4.9.36-43)

Plotinian emanation, however, not only proceeds from its source, in what me might call the prolonging path of meditation, but it also can pause, turning to contemplate its source, and thereby perfect its essence by reflectively gazing on its Form, which itself proceeds from the One. Soul, then, of which body is a part, may also return to its source, unlike the light from a flashlight, but something closer, superficially imaged, to current controversial cosmologies that theorize a Big Crunch after every Big Bang (Ellis, et al, 2012, 146–7).

We can also image Plotinus's system as internally stacked *matryushka* dolls; as ripples emanating from a drop; or, a Plotinian favourite, radii expanding from a hub. *Ennead* V, 5.9.30-4 explains that the hypostases are not separate locations:

> But Soul is not in the universe**,** but the universe is in it: for body is not the soul's place, but Soul is in the Intellect and body is in Soul,[57] and Intellect in something else; but there is nothing other than this for it to be in: it is not, then, in anything; in this way, therefore, it is nowhere. Where then are the other things? In it.

Thus he aims to avoid anyone taking misleading spatial formulations too seriously. He writes, then, as carefully as he can of phenomena understood as in Soul; of Soul in Intellect; and Intellect in the One, which is in nothing and is nowhere, beyond being.

On Plotinus's aforementioned frustration at Plato's formulations that seem to invite Two-Worlds readings, Sara Rappe observes that,

> we catch glimmers of Plotinus' critique of linguistic practices that characterized . . . the prior philosophical tradition. . . . [He] criticizes the Platonic language of abstraction and along with it the entire Platonic dualist ontology. (Rappe, 2000, 113)

Thus Plotinus says,

> the ideas are not placed separately and matter on one side a long way off on the other and then illumination comes to matter from somewhere up there: I am afraid this would be empty words. For what could 'far off' and 'separately' mean in this context? (*Ennead* VI, 5.8)

[57] Armstrong notes that body being in soul is a Platonic doctrine; see *Timaeus*, 36E.

Plotinus is frustrated not at the participatory theory of Forms and particulars, but with a way of speaking that puzzles many of Plato's readers.

Plotinus's stance against separationist Two-Worlds theories coheres with his aesthetics of the experience of beauty as the proper response to 'the One Life', Plotinus's phrase for how the One is present to the universe it contains. At the end of *Ennead* VI 5.11, he says,

> Form is certainly in some way present to everything.

He continues, beginning *Ennead* VI, 5.12:

> How then is it [Form] present? As one life: for life in a living being does not reach only so far, and then is unable to extend over the whole, but it is everywhere.[58]

Coleridge describes his aesthetic response with the same phrase, in 'The Eolian Harp':

> O! the one Life within us and abroad,
> Which meets all motion and becomes it soul,
> A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
> Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where—

From his own One Life standpoint, Plotinus argues against Gnostic Two-World-ism (*Ennead* II, 9, 'Against the Gnostics'). He opposes the doctrine that the sense-world is evil. Gnosticism, he charges, disregards virtue and fails to understand the intelligible within the sensible:

> But every soul is a child of That Father. . . . How can this universe exist if it was cut off from that other world? . . . [B]ecause they despise . . . [what is so nearly akin to the other world] . . . they do not know the higher beings either but only talk as if they did. (*Ennead* II, 9.16)

And at *Ennead* III, 2.3, he says,

> And it is not proper for anyone to speak ill of even this universe as not being beautiful or the best of all things which have body . . . [This universe is] a whole, all beautiful, and self-sufficient and friends with itself and with its parts

At *Ennead* V, 9.13.13-18, he asserts that:

> Everything then that a soul . . . has here below is there in the intelligible world, so that . . . there are not only the things in the sense-world there, but more

He describes the tips of radii stemming from their hub, the One. Illustrating the Forms' unity in the One, the radii show how individuals need not be separate, and that:

[58] Parallels of meaning and context, on top of Coleridge's enthusiasm for Plotinus, persuade me that this is Coleridge's source for his notion of 'the one Life within us and abroad', in 'The Eolian Harp'.

> every centre will not be cut off from that one first centre . . . but all of them are one together. But if we likened all the intelligibles to many centres all going back to and united in one centre, but appearing as many because of their lines – the lines do not generate them but show them – the lines might serve our purpose at present by providing an analogy to the things by contact with which the intelligible nature appears to be present as many and in many places. (*Ennead* VI, 5.5.12-23)

His One Life Neo-Platonism, which later helps to shape the Romantic aesthetic, describes intelligibles as accessible within sense experience. Plotinus reasons that *aisthesis* must itself be capable of approaching the Ideas, and even below that, one can begin the ascent from the sexually generative soul:

> But if someone is unable to grasp this kind of soul which thinks purely, let him take the soul which forms opinions, and then ascend from this. But if he cannot even do this, let him take sense-perception which acquires the forms in broader extension and sense-perception by itself with its powers which is already in the forms. But if someone wants to, let him descend to the generative [*gennōsan*: reproductive] soul and go right on to what it makes, and then ascend from there, from the ultimate forms to the forms which are ultimate in the opposite sense, or, rather, to the primary forms. (*Ennead* V, 3.9)

Because the Forms determine sense perception and its objects, the latter are not utterly cut off from the former. For Plotinus, although sense perception might not be the royal road to Ideas, it is nonetheless suffused with them.

He implies a sensuous infinitude in experience of the kind that Bradley (1893) understands as an infinitude of relations towards an ever-encompassing reality (esp. Ch. 15: 'Thought and Reality'). Similarly, Coleridge describes 'the plenitude of the sense' (*Reflection*, 375; *Statesman's Manual*, 69). Plotinian sense-experience is rich, with sense-experience touched by the Ideas, and the radii in his analogy proceed from and relate back to the centre. Rich experience, however, is pre-discursive; it is mute. As such, it has a polar harmony with noetic contemplation.

While *noesis* is praeter-conceptual contemplation, sensuous experience pre-conceptually intuits reality as appearance. *Noesis* contemplates Ideas, whereas in sense perception this possibility is, for Plotinus and Coleridge, latent. Hence for Coleridge, 'Reason is indeed much closer to Sense than to Understanding' (*Reflection*, 223), which likeness he illustrates by paraphrasing from Hooker's *Lawes of Ecclesiatical Polity* (1682, Bk II, §7):

> Reason . . . is a direct Aspect of Truth, an inward Beholding, having a similar relation to the Intelligible or Spiritual, as SENSE has to the Material or Phenomenal. (*Reflection*, 223-4)

This position echoes the Plotinian affinity between sensation and intellection, with the one converting to the other:

> so that these sense-perceptions Here are dim intellections, but the intellections There are clear sense-perceptions. (*Ennead* VI, 7.7, 30-32)

The formulation recalls St Paul's:

> Now we see through a glass darkly; then we shall see face to face. (1 Corinthians, 13:12)

Inverted, and removed of its polarity, one can find the opposing Empiricism of Hume, that thoughts are but 'less lively and vivacious' sensations (*Enquiry*, II.2). Plotinus implies a continuum between sense and reason. This continuum also exists in Coleridge's system, and both authors describe an aesthetic access to Ideas that occurs through imaginative creativity.

Plotinian contemplation of Ideas through *aisthesis* accords with his theory of non-mimetic *poiesis*. The tract *On the Intellectual Beauty* describes the artist creating from Idea to appearance (*Ennead* V.8). His artist contemplates the Idea and aesthetically translates its seminal-principle into material art. Thus *poiesis* is a parallel creation, and not a thrice-removed copy.

In fancy, Coleridge finds the production of superficial similes and mechanical, fanciful constructions, such as combining a human torso with the body of a horse.[59] In the least valuable occurrences of fancy, there is:

> an 'Incredulus odi'[60] which it leaves on the mind—the imperious sense of the *Absurdity* of the arbitrary *fiction*. (*Marginalia* IV, 596-7, note to Scott's *The Monastery*)

Fancy never departs from 'fixities and definites' which are its 'counters', being 'no more than a mode of Memory' (*Biographia* I, 305) and 'Always the Ape, too often the adulterator and counterfeit of our memory' (II, 235). Fancy deals in association's ready-mades. In contrast, imagination is 'a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation', which 'struggles to idealise and unify.' Imagination's apex is reached in the creativity of the secondary imagination, which:

> is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead. (I, 202)

Engell (1981, 348) comments, in an observation equally suiting Plotinus, that Coleridge:

[59] To borrow Horace's example, *Ars poetica*, l. 1.
[60] Latin: 'I discredit and abhor', from Horace's *Ars poetica*, l. 188.

> combines the classical concept of art as an imitation of nature with the newer premium on originality and imagination. In imitating nature, the artist imitates and appropriates the *process* of nature. He creates a language, a series of symbols, which reflect and represent this dynamic process.

Engell highlights that Coleridge's artist takes nature's process, rather than its products, as model. This imaginative creation of a symbolic language is a dynamic parallel to nature, so speaking of imitation here risks missing an important point. The series of symbols are not so much representations of this dynamic process as artistic instances of it.

Genuine artworks parallel natural phenomena coming-to-be. Plotinus understands art as original, contemplative creation. Artworks are thus dignified as more than mere copies, shimmering with what Hadot's commentary, drawing on Félix Ravaisson, identifies as grace (1993, 50-51). In this shimmering, the Idea of the Good overflows its aesthetic expression.

Understanding beauty as the overflow of Idea evoked by the object in nature or art later impressed Kant when he explored the aesthetic presentation of Ideas. Kant's aesthetic Ideas present the sublimity or beauty that he relates to the morally good. Any presentation of an aesthetic Idea stimulates much thought, and this 'much thought' never fails to overflow the concepts of the understanding. Appreciating art is to recognize an Idea, a transcending principle, in the presentation. This Ideality is art's extraordinary quality.

This is not to say that so-called ordinary objects cannot also shimmer with beauty. Plotinus remarks that:

> Here below also beauty is what illuminates good proportions rather than the good proportions themselves, and this is what is lovable. For why is there more light of beauty on a living face, but only a trace of it on a dead one, even if its flesh and its proportions are not yet wasted away? (*Ennead* VI, 7.22, 25-29)

That beauty's shimmer signifies something tremendous is an aesthetic insight Kant and Plotinus shared, despite their otherwise very different systems. The tremendous is encountered in experiences of magnitude or power as sublime, or with something so subtle and delicate as to constantly elude even thoughtful sensitivity. We now turn to Kant's theory of aesthetic Idea.

2.3 Kant's Ideas of Reason and Aesthetic Ideas

On finding an ally to develop a more comprehensive philosophy than the British Empiricism of his day, Coleridge describes Kant as having taken 'possession of me as with a giant's hand' (*Biographia*, I, 153). Because eighteenth-century Empiricists hold imagination to reorder impressions mechanically for a passive and fragmentary self (if one exists at all, and here Hume is sceptical), their philosophy has no place for truly creative poetry. With Kant, however, Coleridge hopes to work out a theory of productive mind, and not of reproductive mechanism. Kant's unified mind actively constructs its world, in contrast to Locke's mind being like 'white paper, void of all characters', an 'empty cabinet' (Locke, [1690] 1975, II.1.2, 33; I.2.15, 11); or Hume's 'heap or collection of different perceptions' ([1739-40] 1978, I.4.6, 207).

For Locke, the:

> senses at first let in particular ideas, and furnish the yet empty cabinet; and the mind by degrees growing familiar with some of them, they are lodged in the memory, and names got to them. Afterwards the mind, proceeding farther, abstracts them, and by degrees learns the use of general names. In this manner the mind comes to be furnished with ideas (I.ii.15)

With this mechanical model of mind founding Empiricist epistemology, knowledge becomes an unverifiable, passive conformity of mental impressions with objects. Kant's revolution proceeds by reversing this relationship and having objects conform to the to the limits and modalities of our experience. Kant, however, does not refute Hume's scepticism, but relocates it, finding:

> it necessary to deny *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*. (*CPR*, Bxxx)

Certainty is lost as phenomenal presentations are constructed from mental concepts and forms of intuition. Instead of requiring cognition to conform to objects, Kant suggests to:

> try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition. (*CPR*, xvi)

In the *Theaetetus*, Plato already opposes the Protagorean thesis that knowledge lies in sense experience's conformity with objects. As we have seen, Plato argues that knowledge involves the access of Ideas by thought. Ideas are standards by which general categories and universals can replace sensory particulars, making experience intelligible and allowing argument to advance by dialectic, accepting self-contradiction as grounds for refutation.

To reiterate, Platonic Ideas are not mind-dependent entities. Kantian Ideas, however, are, and here lies Coleridge's fundamental and ultimately irreconcilable distance from Kant:

> The Subjectivity of Reason is the great Error of the Kantean system. (*Marginalia* V, 757)

By Subjectivity of Reason, Coleridge indicates that for Kant the Ideas of reason are not objective realities but regulative principles in a human faculty. Although Wellek simplistically conceives that Coleridge misunderstands Kant (Wellek, 1931), Coleridge in fact grasps that, regarding the restriction of knowledge to phenomena, Kant moves towards another reductionism. Kantian Ideas are attributes or forces of mind, whereas Platonic Ideas are mind-independent realities.

That rational ideas for Kant are not objective, mind-independent powers or ultimates is at least the usual interpretation of Kant. However, of Plato, Kant writes,

> He knew that our reason naturally exalts itself to forms of knowledge which so far transcend the bounds of experience that no given material object can ever coincide with them, but which nonetheless must be recognized as having their own reality, and which are by no means fictions of the brain. (*CPR*, A314)

Moreover, the Second Critique (*CPrR*), now that the First Critique (*CPR* B, Preface) 'limits science to make room for faith', finds a higher place for rational ideas in regulating conduct according to universalizable maxims that can be willed to be universal without contradiction. Further, in the Third Critique (*CJ*), an arguably higher place still can be found for the rational ideas in the contemplation of beauty (in aesthetic judgment) and of the purposes of created nature (in teleological judgment).

Modern philosophy thus returns to a contemplative attitude with Kant's *CJ*. Here the Ideas of reason, which in the First Critique serve the architectonic organization of the sciences, find a positive role in shaping aesthetic response. Kant's contemplative experience, at the end of *CPrR*, of awe and wonder at the starry heavens above him and the moral law within indicate the transcendent in the power of its beauty and sublimity, which theme becomes a central concern in the Third Critique, the *CJ*. Contemplation in aesthetic experience is very different from the propositional reasoning of metaphysics. For Kant, the former was a legitimate, the latter an illegitimate use of reason and Ideas. Kant held the metaphysical use of reason to make knowledge claims about transcendent reality to be illegitimate.

The *CJ*, however, provides a legitimate use of the Ideas beyond scientific architectonic and ethical postulates, namely aesthetic Ideas responding to the sublime and beautiful. In aesthetic contemplation, a space is cleared for values. Without this space, there can be no beholding, no appreciation of any experiences having special significance or resonance in our lives. Such beholding is a poetic, contemplative activity making no illegitimate claims to factual knowledge. Contemplating rational Ideas, which for Kant are not objective, creates an axiological space for ethical and aesthetic concern.

For Plato, however, Ideas constitute objective knowledge. For Kant, what we derive in knowledge is in large part what we put there, in terms of our concepts and categories, in the first place. Thus Kant sails close to the reef of psychologism, although he might be salvaged by attempts to distinguish transcendental arguments concerning experience from psychologism, or the belief that the laws of logic are ultimately dependent on how the mind's is constituted such that what is called truth is a construct of concepts.[61]

Plato avoids this reef because for him, Ideas are accessible but, unlike for Kant, mind-independent. Platonic Ideas are unchanging, ultimate references of truth, the laws of phenomena that remain however phenomena change, even if phenomena entirely disappear. For Kant, however, our knowledge of phenomena ultimately refers back to the 'our' in 'our knowledge', and for Kant this means the categories of the understanding.

For Coleridge, a fundamental division of types of mind exists between those for whom Ideas are mind-independent powers, and those who conceive Ideas to be qualities or attributes of mind (*Table Talk* I, 269, July 2, 1830). In contrast, and despite arguing that knowledge is more than the mechanical ordering of sense impressions, Kant sided with those for whom Ideas are attributes of mind. Coleridge's Understanding is a facility with concepts abstracted from experience, and reason is no faculty, and is hence not a subject for anthropology or psychology. For him, reason has access to Ideas; indeed, it is Ideas. Thus he holds that reason is:

> identical with its appropriate objects. Thus God, the soul, eternal truth, etc., are the objects of reason; but they are themselves reason. (*Friend* I, 155-6)

Kant's pure, a priori concepts of the understanding are not, unlike his empirical concepts, abstracted from experience. Experience, he essays to deduce, is the manifold

[61] For more on Kant's proneness to the charge of psychologism, see Appendix XI, 'On Psychologism', in Brentano, [1874] 1995, 238-43.

of sense intuition organized according to pure concepts, which he proposes as the categories to which any possible experience must conform. The twelve pure, non-empirical, categories consist of four moments: quality, quantity, modality, and relation, each standing over a further three categories.[62] Kant's twelve deduced categories were adapted from Aristotle's logical division into ten categories of all possible, actual, and potential objects of thought. Such categorization attempts to cover, a priori, all space and time and perhaps, logically, beyond.[63] Kant's table of categories attempts to exhaustively subsume any presentation to experience, and in his system it is through these filters that experience must be formed. Once underway, experience is further differentiated by accrued empirical concepts, which are not a priori, but are created *in media res*, and usually by cultural inheritance.

Kant distinguishes pure concepts not only from empirical, a posteriori, concepts, but also from Ideas of reason, with the pure and empirical concepts on one side, and Ideas of reason on the other. Concepts and categories apply to phenomena, and their applicability remains within experience alone. The pure concepts are not experientially derived, and we can never lay our hand on causality, or on absence. Regarding pure concepts' confinement to phenomena, Kant writes,

> Everything that the understanding draws out of itself, without borrowing it from experience, it nevertheless has solely for the sake of use in experience. (*CPR*, A235, B295)

For Kant, then, experience is the only legitimate field for the understanding's concepts, and much of what the concepts understand is what they themselves initially and synthetically configured – out of intuited sense and conceptual thought – into experience.[64] They cannot apply to objects considered apart from their appearance. The categories impose their structures onto the manifold given to the senses, imposing welligibility of their on manufacture.

The *CPR* describes the pursuit of metaphysics as objective knowledge as the employment of pure concepts beyond their legitimate applicability, i.e. beyond sense experience. Such metaphysics would allow the free play of the Ideas of reason, but this

[62] For his table of categories and its deductive setting, see *CPR*, A71.
[63] *Organon* I: 'Categories', where he attempts to list all predicate types: substance; quantity; quality; relation; place (or location); time (or occurrence); position (or posture); having (or state), condition; action; being-affected (or passive undergoing).
[64] Hence, as Nietzsche argues, the Kantian understanding comprehends only what it itself projects (How the Real World Became an Illusion, in *TI*, [1895] 1990). The purely intuited in the experience, for Kant, remains non-conceptual and hence irreducibly mysterious, although, as his Second and Third Critiques suggests, evocative of rational Ideas.

would conclude with the impasses of the antinomies. Kant's polarized antinomies, e.g. 'the universe has a beginning in time' versus 'the universe could have had no temporal beginning', demonstrate that there is a problem with the pure reason of metaphysics. The problem arises, for Kant, from the illegitimate use of pure concepts beyond the bounds of experience, where they have no traction, and thus the antinomies symptomatically arise. For any conclusion of pure reason, e.g. 'the universe must have had a beginning in time', an opposing conclusion can also be reached, in this case, 'the universe could not have had a beginning in time', with no method or higher court existing to decide between the antinomies.

The antinomies demonstrate the impotence of treating Ideas of reason as if they were like empirical concepts of the understanding. With no experiential content to grasp, Kant's Ideas might appear to forever lack application. However, as third-order non-empirical concepts they apply to pure concepts, having legitimacy in regulating concepts and their products by systematically unifying empirical knowledge. Kant's Ideas of reason thus regulate the understanding, guiding empirical research into an architectonic, systemic knowledge. He asserts that,

> Human reason is by its nature architectonic (A474, B502)

and this owes to the superordinate nature of the Ideas which organize our experiences and thoughts. Aiming towards a complete system of knowledge, each transcendental Idea functions as a *focus imaginarius* (A699, B697). Thus, however unconsciously, empirical investigation and practical interests eventually converge towards a higher unity.

Kantian reason, then, systematically regulates all knowledge yet provides none. What have been called the Moral Sciences and the Humanities, have been guided and unified by the Idea of the soul. The Natural Sciences are similarly unified by the Idea of cosmos, a universal whole. Soul and world themselves are yet more generally unified, for Kant, under the Idea of God, guiding Theology. So, in the First Critique, Kant deduces legitimate and illegitimate bounds for rational Ideas. Defining the illegitimate use proved fatal for speculative metaphysics. The legitimate use shows Ideas as intellectual focal points, creating a demand for system and the architectonic tendency of knowledge.

In the Second Critique, a further legitimate role for Ideas of reason was explored. In the practical realm, Ideas provide postulates for moral thinking and allow the moral law

to be taken as the principle for ordering our moral actions and judgments. This regulating, law-giving, capacity of reason works ethically in Ideas generating postulates for morality, generating moral principles and testing whether we can willingly universalize them without contradiction.

In the Third Critique, aesthetic Ideas, excited by the sublime and the beautiful, intimate aesthetically that the mind is not confined to sensuous experience. The aesthetic pleasure in art and nature is not merely that of sensation, although perception is necessary in the experience. The aesthetic pleasure is rather one of reflection. These aesthetic Ideas can never be 'completely compassed and made intelligible by language' (*CJ*, §49). They are, he continues,

> the counterpart (pendant) of a *rational idea*, which conversely is a concept to which no intuition (or representation of the imagination) can be adequate.

These aesthetic Ideas are presented by an 'animating principle of the mind', *Geist*, which spirit or genius is, 'nothing other than the faculty for the presentation of aesthetic ideas' (*CJ*, §49).

The aesthetic Idea presents 'much thinking', on the occasion of a representation of the imagination,

> without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., a concept, to be adequate to it. (*CJ*, §49)

With the rational Idea and the aesthetic Idea, Kant covers all possible presentations transcending the concepts of the understanding. It follows that rational and aesthetic Ideas, intimate the supersensible without any intuitions of it. Rational Ideas present concepts to which no intuition, or representation of the imagination, can be adequate. Covering the other side of transcendence, aesthetic Ideas convey imaginative representations stimulating much thought that cannot be contained by concepts. Hence discursive language cannot make aesthetic Ideas conceptually intelligible, despite the 'much thought' generated. Aesthetic Ideas present something ineffable, i.e. beyond the discursive concept's capacity. Contemplating beauty or the sublime in experience stimulates the 'much thought' beyond the conceptual.

Kant argues that it is, 'precisely in the poetic art that the faculty of aesthetic ideas can show itself to full advantage' (*CJ*, §49). *Geist* accounts for the difference between the aesthetic qualities of genuine poetry and compositions that are 'exact and well arranged', 'neat and elegant', 'solid and at the same time elaborate, but without spirit'

(*CJ*, §49). In the latter works, there is no animating Idea; without *Geist*'s aesthetic Ideas, the work never transcends concepts. Although neat, elegant compositions might impress an audience, genuine aesthetic experience is only provoked by the imaginative presentation of Ideas.

In both editions of the First Critique, Kant described imagination as a 'hidden art in the depths of the human soul' (A141, B180-1). Although referring to imagination as the active faculty in the transcendental schematism, responsible for uniting intuitions with concepts, it applies equally to the imaginative creativity of the fine arts considered in the Third Critique. Here Kant describes *Geist*, spirit or genius, as profoundly obscure. Even the creating artist:

> does not know himself how he has come by his ideas. (*CJ*, §46)

Nevertheless, genius may convey aesthetic Ideas to other artists, or pupils, if 'nature has endowed them with a like proportion of their mental powers', such that they may in suit creatively develop aesthetic Ideas (*CJ*, §47). The artist's public is also inspired by the aesthetic Ideas, but are not necessarily able to develop those aesthetic Ideas themselves.

Kant's poet can thus:

> interpret to sense the rational ideas of invisible beings, the kingdom of the blessed, hell, eternity, creation, etc. (*CJ*, §49)

These exemplify the rational Ideas that Kant argues find their proper purview in ethics as practical reason, and which stray out of bounds when they are employed as concepts in the exercise of speculative metaphysics. This application of aesthetic Ideas is as close Kant brings his Idea to the Platonic Idea, as that 'maximum' toward which imagination aims in encountering the praeter-conceptual excess of any transcendent intimation. Kant's comment on the Platonic Idea can be applied forward to his own aesthetic Idea,

> Plato employed the expression *idea* . . . [for] . . . something that not only is never borrowed from the senses, but that far surpasses even the concepts of the understanding . . . inasmuch as nothing congruent with it is ever found in experience. (*CPR*, A313, B370)

He suggests that aesthetic Ideas are best employed with 'death, envy, and all vices, as also love, fame, and the like', which the poet offers as, 'transgressing the limits of experience'. Here, poetic imagination provides:

> the display of reason in its attainment of a maximum, to body them forth with a sense of completeness. (*CJ*, §49)

Thus Kant's aesthetic Ideas originating from examples within experience but transgressing it, death, envy, love, etc., are Ideas of Imagination, emulating, or paralleling, Ideas of Reason. Coleridge would later say that the Ideas presented by Imagination are aesthetically conveyed through symbols.

As Gasché (2003, 46) comments, Kant's aesthetic Ideas:

> resemble rational ideas ([which] . . . cannot be sensibly represented) given that it is impossible to discursively exhaust them or conceptually pin them down. . . . They are the concepts in view of which genius creates beautiful art . . . whose presentation and expression make up works of genius.

Because the aesthetic Idea presents something less definite than any concept of the understanding, I would say *aesthetic Idea* where Gasché says *concept*. Nevertheless, Kant's aesthetic Idea often augments an empirical concept, and thus deepens and enriches its referential meaning and resonance. Hence someone may remark that they never thought the same way about concept X since they read novel Y, or heard music Z.

We have concepts for death, envy, love, and the like, but there is always an important remainder beyond the understanding's conception of the experience. This remainder feels profoundly important, and the mind wishes to encircle and ponder it. Thus imagination is set in free play, contrasting with the understanding's rules of applying a concept. In providing a maximum, such as the Ideal of death, of love, etc., experience is imaginatively embodied with a sense of completeness. This attempt, Kant suggests, is poetry.

Imagination's attempts at shaping aesthetic Ideas to embody more fully transgressing presentations in experience begin with the concept yet add to it 'a wealth of thought' beyond any definite concept and give 'aesthetically an unbounded expansion to the concept itself' (*CJ,* §49). Thus imagination provides the aesthetic attributes of the object. More thought is generated here than can be expressed 'in a concept determined by words' (*CJ*, §49). While in the First Critique imagination was subordinate to the understanding in the production of knowledge about phenomena, in the Third Critique the 'understanding is at the service of imagination and not *vice versa*' (*CJ*, §22) in the capacity for aesthetic experience and the construction of aesthetic judgment.

The 'more thought' generated runs for assistance to the rational Ideas, unable to appeal to any determinate concept of the understanding. The thinking mind is here broadened by contemplation, aiming to complete the experience that transcends

conceptual understanding. The understanding, faced with death, envy, love, and the like, leaves imagination to comprehend the experience aesthetically where conceptual understanding is struck dumb. Imagination, in this poetic aspect, 'stirs up a crowd of sensations and secondary representations for which no [conceptual] expression can be found' (*CJ*, §49).

Facing the transcendence of the Idea, unable to conceptualize, the understanding is very much like the person subject to Socratic *elenchos*, with the transcendence of the aesthetic Idea playing Socrates. The one under *elenchos*, for example Meno discussing whether virtue consists in teachable knowledge, finds all definitions and concepts fail to stabilize and define the central matter under examination. When this failure is recognized, the questioned one, perhaps previously self-deemed an expert in the field, is newly perplexed as if cast under a spell, and struck by a stingray (*Meno*, 79e-80d). Socrates educational purpose was not, however, to cripple intellectual activity, but to stimulate thought by inducing his companion to realize that where the matter was presumed to be well known, there is in fact ignorance.

McGhee (2000, 102) suggests that aesthetic Ideas stimulate oscillation between the original concept, e.g. grief, 'and the possibilities of responsiveness to it.' He highlights the vibrancy in the encounter, beside the 'much thought' it stimulates. Far from presenting a schematic rule for a concept, the aesthetic Idea interprets the experience as cosmically significant in a way that transcends conceptual meaning. He points out that the aesthetic Idea can run through:

> a cascade of particulars intimating or showing the nature of a universal, and in so doing showing the structure of *sense*. (McGhee, 2000, 104)

This showing the nature of a universal is the *modus aestheticus* of conveying a maximum, as Kant puts it. Hence McGhee calls the aesthetic Idea,

> an image with evocative power, an image which carries some of the charge of the universal even in its particularity. (2000, 105)

Genuine art, in this view, works Ideas into aesthetic form. Art, then, is the product of genius, i.e. of soulful, praeter-conceptual communication. This spirit creates from genius, and not only from talent. Kant's *Geist* animates imagination to move talent beyond concepts and through Ideas. In one aspect, Kant's aesthetic Idea echoes Plotinus's non-mimetic theory of artistic creation whereby the artist presents material unified and guided by the same principles as those behind natural phenomena. This

aspect is expressed clearly when Kant states that imagination uses aesthetic Ideas to create, 'another nature, out of the material which the real one gives it' (*CJ*, §49). Kant's productive Imagination seeks to order aesthetic experience under a concept, but fails to achieve this task of cataloguing. Neither the empirical concept, nor the pure concept of the understanding, can contain what overflows here, namely the transcendence intimated in the experience.

With his unfailing powers of descriptive drama, Sartre considers such concept-overflowing experience in his novel *Nausea*. When the protagonist Antoine Roquentin sits on a park-bench at dusk, he observes the root of a chestnut tree and senses an overflow of being that transcends the concept 'root'. The conceptual understanding of a tree root as a pump for taking in water and nutrients cannot comprehend the sense of transcendent existence he encounters. Thus he begins to understand the previously inexplicable feelings of nausea that are increasingly overcoming him: they express the feebleness of human language and understanding to come fully to terms with the superfluity of being.

Roquentin spirals into a dizzy whirl occasioned by this epiphany of the ungraspable, yet felt aspects of existence. Where Sartre finds this overflowing in existence as such, Kant addresses it in the beautiful and the sublime. Sartre's overflowing, or superfluity, his *de trop*, takes the same form, I suggest, as the Kantian excess of Idea over concept. Plotinus, too, says the overflow is experienced as shimmering, and as a kind of grace. This grace also implies excess, a gratuity, with the shimmering providing an ecstasis (standing-out) of extraordinary beauty. Beauty's shimmer often calls for an attending stillness, saying that here is something more special, perhaps sacred. A space is created for this beauty in our attending to it, whether in a gallery, or in the sense of the beautiful ecstatically standing out from its surroundings. This space is what I term the *con-templum*, the space offered in the act of contemplation.

Examples of the hushed gallery, concert hall, temple or cathedral must not evoke notions of merely outward form and shows of sobriety, for the *con-templum* experience is not one of putting on a pious expression, but one that shimmers in beholding something beyond oneself.

My daughter has just been born, and it is her first week at our Kyoto home after the maternity hospital. We walk, mother-in-law too, to Imamiya Jinja, a nearby Shinto shrine. Baby Martha's grandmother prays to the local deities for thanksgiving and

safekeeping. We walk through a large concrete *torii* to enter the shrine, where old Pine trees and an ancient Camphor tree remain sacred. *Torii* are symbolic gates, marking the entrance into a sacred site. Straddling either post of some *torii* sit stone lion-dogs, the left mouthing *Ah*, the right a closed-mouthed *Mm*. We walk through the centre, embodying the *Uu* in the middle of the efficiently expressive holy word, *Aum*.

There are many *torii* in and around this shrine. Some stone or concrete, with moss growing on their north sides. Some unvarnished, dark wood, others taller, gaudily painted in vermillion and black. Each marks a transition into the sacred. A young woman parks her Honda Cub scooter, removes her helmet, and walks through the *torii*. She will ring the clattering copper bell to signal her prayer to the local *kami*, or gods, then return, again through the transitional *torii*, to her bike and her daily round. An old couple leave as we enter. As they step over the threshold, returning to the city street, they turn to face the shrine through the *torii* they just stepped through, then bow to the *kami*, in quietly offered respect. The *torii* is what the Greeks called a *temenos*: the sign of a site, a temple, cut off for contemplation.

The site has several small shrines and one main one. Each has its own *torii*, and some shrines elsewhere have several *torii*, sometimes scores, in succession, emphasizing a special degree of transit into contemplative space. Yet ordinary concerns are not put down and set aside. The mood of concern is transformed. Ordinary human concerns are given space to be revealed more purely, in this traditional site of the local *kami*. After stepping through the *torii*, visitors cleanse their hands and mouths, ladling water from the mouths of copper dragons. And then another transitional step: a short walk to stand before the shrine; clap three times; then shake the clattering, copper bell by pulling on its long, thick, braided rope to rattle one's votive presence to the *kami*. And then pray. Something short. Bow, then make way for the next person.

This Shinto scene describes a clear example of the *con-templum*, where a space is reserved for purer considerations, beholding, and appreciation. The thing contemplated is often something ordinary, but unwrapped, and held up in silence: hope for a job; a new baby (extraordinary in one marvellous sense, ordinary as rain in another); a looming exam; a wish for love; concern for someone's health. Bells semi-randomly clatter and tinkle. Is this how our thoughts and concerns sound to the gods? Yet these sounds and movements cannot annoy here. Theirs is a gentle, little motion within the greater stillness of the place. How sympathetically soft-clattering sound and motion are held, in this contemplative site.

There must be many sober pleas made here for promotion, for romance, worldly success, and all hopes that easily find their frame in petitionary prayer. Little wishes are briefly begged of the gods, with the petitioner's motorcycle boots firmly on the ground, helmet ready for return to the busy day. But even still, a space has been set aside. And others bring humble thanksgiving. Stillness. Silence echoes silence, enveloping all little clatters, deepening the caverns for its own resound. Reserving the space and time for contemplation, one becomes more receptive to the epiphanies it returns. Only a humbling hollowing of the self can create a chamber that may begin to repeat, still insufficiently, the profounder response to our softly clattering calls. The hollowing holds onto no firm concepts and learns to let drop self-concerned, material wishes.

This movement beyond concepts leads Sartre, Kant, and others to epiphanic intimations of value in a vision of things unmediated by concepts As Plotinus writes, recalling Plato's *theia mania*, one power of Intellect is conceptual and soberly examines objects and situations, but another transcends sober examination and its concepts with direct awareness. That is:

> Intellect . . . has one power for thinking, by which it looks at the things in itself, and one by which it looks at what transcends it by a direct awareness and reception, by which also before it saw only, and by seeing it acquired intellect and is one. And that first one is the contemplation of Intellect in its right mind, and the other is Intellect in love, when it goes out of its mind 'drunk with the nectar'; then it falls in love, simplified into happiness by having its fill; and it is better to be drunk with a drunkenness like this than to be more respectably sober. (*Ennead* VI, 7.35, 19-27)

This still, adoring ecstasy provides no determining concept. Rather, it reflects and contemplates, leading to higher courts of appeal among the Ideas of reason, whereby it may relate to moral principle, or principles of totality, universality, and value. Strictly speaking, the natural phenomena exciting the feeling are not themselves sublime. They are thought so because they evoke the indefinite, unbounded quality of the Ideas of reason, which for Kant include the kingdom of ends, God, the soul, and the cosmos. These phenomena evoke Ideas of reason because their presentations cannot be grasped by casting about among empirical concepts or the concepts of the understanding, and thus they are referred to regulative Ideas rather than to empirical or constitutive concepts and categories.

The thrill of the sublime arises from a potentially threatening sense of power in the presentation incapable of being fully subsumed under a concept. The pleasure from the sublime, however, arises from realizing that the only things comparable to this

unbounded presentation are our own (for Kant)[65] Ideas of reason. Hence we receive an intimation of the supersensible and praeter-conceptual. In this experience, the supersensible, praeter-conceptual self is reflected and symbolized. Kant asks,

> Who would want to call 'sublime' shapeless mountain masses towering above one another in wild disorder with their pyramids of ice, or the dark raging sea, etc.? Yet the mind feels itself elevated . . . judging of such things, when, without regard to their form, it abandons itself to the imagination and to Reason—which, although placed in combination with the imagination without any definite purpose, merely extends it—it yet finds the whole power of the imagination inadequate to its ideas. (*CJ*, §26)

He shows that differently sublime presentations recall different Ideas of reason. The mathematical sublime recalls Ideas of totality, cosmos, eternity, and infinity. Then there is the sublimity of power, of action, evoked by the dynamically sublime. This dynamically sublime presents the awesome power of nature against our own physical fragility. Reflective consciousness stimulated by the sublime into contemplation recollects moral principles as the proper field of rational Ideas.

An essential feature of the phenomenology of aesthetic experience lies in the awareness that concepts fail to properly apply here, thus discursive thought cannot even begin. This is very different from metaphysical speculation, which not only begins with discursive thought, but also, once started, often finds it hard to stop. So while rational Ideas are misapplied in seeking metaphysical knowledge, their aesthetic application provides intimations, but makes no such knowledge claims. Deferring to Ideas brings implicit awareness of transcending the conceptual. The supersensible is therefore not presented as the object of facts to be constructed, but as implicit in principles regulating moral judgment, for example, and conduct, and which universalize the touchstones of moral value (freedom and dignity) that aesthetic experience suggests.

Kant's aesthetic genius:

> puts the mental powers purposively into swing, i.e., into such a play as maintains itself and strengthens the mental powers in their exercise. (*CJ*, §49)

Aesthetic Ideas hence help us to:

> feel our freedom from the law of association (which attaches us to the empirical employment of imagination), so that the material supplied to us by nature in accordance with this law can be worked up into something different which surpasses nature. (*CJ*, §49)

Kant's Idea in many respects opposes the Platonic Idea, or any Neo-Platonic interpretation. Nevertheless, in both systems, Idea is no abstraction from nature or

[65] For Platonists, however, Ideas are objective realities, and not 'our own'.

experience. That would be the empirical concept, on the one hand, or sensible intuition, on the other, or its schema in the middle. Hence, for Kant, aesthetic ideas work on natural materials to surpass material nature.

Arendt comments that the feeling of freedom given by aesthetic Ideas allows the mind to think again about the particular behind the concept. This feeling of freedom reunites us with the particular that is otherwise lost in the necessarily general concept. 'If you say, "What a beautiful rose!" ' observes Arendt (1982, 13), 'you do not arrive at this judgment by first saying, "All roses are beautiful, this flower is a rose, hence this rose is beautiful."' As in Sartre's point about the chestnut root, there is a transcendence, an overflow of particularity that seems to be of some important but inexplicable quality.

The jolt provided by the aesthetic Idea helps remove conceptual thought's film of familiarity that dulls experience and prevents authenticity. Remaining only within the bounds of the conceptual, and in consequence of a:

> film of familiarity we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand. (*Biographia* II, 7)

Aesthetic Ideas provide a sense of freedom from that determinism which characterizes, after the arguments of the First Critique, the phenomenal. Thus for Kant, aesthetic contemplation:

> brings the faculty of intellectual ideas (the reason) into movement. (*CJ*, §49)

This movement of the Ideas of reason is no longer an illicit move made by vain metaphysical speculation. It has a positive result in that it:

> Strengthens the mind by making it feel its faculty—free, spontaneous, and independent of natural determination—of considering and judging nature as a phenomenon in accordance with aspects which it does not present in experience either for sense or understanding, and therefore of using it on behalf of, and as a sort of schema for, the supersensible.' (*CJ*, §53)

Here Kant says that the mind, in presenting aesthetic Ideas, can consider nature as a phenomenon with aspects present neither to sense nor understanding. How can something be considered a phenomenon, and yet have aspects beyond sense and understanding? It cannot be that the phenomenon as such has these aspects. The imagination therefore takes aspects, which might be overwhelming, for example, and makes into a schema for the praeter-conceptual supersensible.

This sort of schema of the supersensible can then be used as currency, equivalent to a concept, or as a pendant, as Kant wrote, for those intimations beyond the bounds of

sense and conceptual understanding. Aesthetic Ideas are taken as symbols in artworks or natural phenomena indicating Ideas. For Kant, art therefore intimates freedom, sometimes immortality, cosmos, the limitless, excess, moral value as something real, beauty, and sublimity.

The experience of beauty primes the mind for moral reasoning in providing a sense of freedom from concepts, the phenomenal chain of determinism, and the law of association. Kant explicitly relates contemplation of nature with moral feeling, maintaining,

> that to take immediate interest in the beauty of nature (not merely to have taste in estimating it) is always a mark of a good soul; and that, where this interest is habitual, it at least indicates a temper of mind favourable to the moral feeling that it should readily associate itself with the contemplation of nature. (*CJ*, §42)

Kant's conviction that natural beauty, and its reproduction in the fine arts, has an ethical, edifying aspect was by no means unique in its time. His contemporary, Reynolds (1797, 198), goes further, suggesting that the artist's thoughts, and not only those about nature:

> may be so far diffused as to extend themselves imperceptibly into publick benefits, and be among the means of bestowing on whole nations refinement of taste; which if it does not lead directly to purity of manners, obviates at least their greatest depravation by disentangling the mind from appetite.

Art primes morality by revealing freedom, and Kant argues that the experience of beauty indicates moral goodness. Aesthetic judgement is, he says,

> purposive in reference to the moral feelings. The Beautiful prepares us to love disinterestedly something, even nature itself. (*CJ*, §29)

He argues for more than the edifying effect of a good hike in the country and a breath of fresh air. Only a free being with ideal standards can experience beauty, and so it is that in aesthetic experience we also recognize our moral calling. Hence,

> the mind cannot ponder upon the beauty of nature without finding itself at the same time interested therein. But this interest is akin to moral, and he who takes such an interest in the beauties of nature can do so only in so far as he previously has firmly established his interest in the morally good. If, therefore, the beauty of nature interests a man immediately, we have reason for attributing to him at least a basis for a good moral disposition. (*CJ*, §42)

Aesthetic appreciation, for Kant, can prime the mind for moral reflection. Correspondingly, the universal moral law can itself be aesthetically appreciated:

> Two things fill the soul [*Gemüt*] with ever new and increasing admiration and awe [*Achtung*], the more often and steadily we reflect upon them: *the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me*. I do not seek or conjecture either of them as if they were veiled obscurities or extravagances beyond the horizon of my vision; I see them before me and connect them immediately with the consciousness of my existence. (*CPrR*, Part Two, Conclusion)

Our discussion will now progress from Kant's poetic vision of the meeting of metaphysics and ethics as they concern realities clearly discerned by frequent and steady reflection, to examine Coleridge's Platonism of Ideas as comprising objective reality itself.

2.4 The Coleridgean Idea

We have already discussed Coleridgean imagination as bridging understanding and reason. This imaginative access to Ideas stimulates the mind's potential as living process, without which it would remain only a mechanical processor of experience. Coleridge expresses his Romantic notion of an imaginative access to Ideas, derived from the Neo-Platonists,[66] accounting for the transcendent in lived experience, arguing that Ideas:

> correspond to substantial beings, to objects the actual subsistence of which is *implied* in their idea, though only *by* the idea revealable. (*Constitution*, 47n)

These Ideas,

> constitute *humanity*. For try to conceive a *man* without the ideas of God, eternity, freedom, will, absolute truth, of the good, the true, the beautiful, the infinite. An *animal* endowed with a memory of appearances and of facts might remain. But the *man* will have vanished, and you have instead a creature more subtle than any beast of the field, but likewise cursed above every beast of the field (*Constitution,* 46)

Against Kant, his Ideas are not just regulative principles impressing and encouraging an orderly, unified system of knowledge. Coleridgean Ideas are not the rational concepts of Kant, because they are not concepts at all, but 'energies of reason' (*Statesman's Manual*, 29). The Coleridgean Idea:

> is deeper than all intelligence, inasmuch as it represents the element of the Will and its essential inderivability. (Cited in Dorothy Emmett, 1952, (offprint: p. 9))

To ask for a conception of an Idea is like asking:

> for an image of a flavour or the odour of a strain of music. (Cited in Dorothy Emmett, 1952, (offprint: p. 9))

It would be all too easy to infer that Coleridge denigrates conceptions, but that would mislead. He recognizes that concepts, these mind-dependent entities, are organs of meaning and discernment, and that:

> Every new term expressing a fact, or a difference, not precisely and adequately expressed by any other word in the same language, is a new organ of thought for the mind that has learnt it. (*Constitution*, 167)

Ideas, however, are not mind-dependent for Coleridge, but are objective realities

[66] Especially Plotinus, but also Proclus's notion of the *symbolon*, which physical object, a miniature idol or even a pebble, is introduced into an Orphic sacramental ritual and becomes, supposedly through participation, or communion, a shard of divine, Ideal, reality. In this *symbolon*, we can find close affinities with Coleridge's Romantic notion of the symbol.

that minds might approach. For Kant, however, Ideas are subjective components of rational beings' faculty of reason. Coleridgean reason, in contrast, is not merely a human faculty; it is not a faculty at all. Hence, reason is:

> present to man, but not appropriated by him. (*Marginalia* VI, 300)

This sense of reason as an objective principle beyond personal appropriation is illustrated well in the explicit rationale of Doyle's fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes:

> 'No, it is not selfishness or conceit', said he, answering, as was his wont, my thoughts rather than my words.[67] 'If I claim full justice for my art, it is because it is an impersonal thing – a thing beyond myself.' (1892, 281, *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*)

For Coleridge, the objective Ideas of reason *are* reason. They comprise a thing beyond oneself. To discuss Ideas of reason as external or internal to mind misses the point, because they are not actually separate from material beings and their phenomena, as misconstrued Two-Worlds interpretations presume. In the Platonic view, material beings and their phenomena are not separate from Ideas and their correlative Laws, but subsist in them, which they instantiate. Neither, for Coleridge, are the Ideas static entities as Platonic Ideas have often been misinterpreted. For Coleridge, Ideas are always powers, and thus dynamic, and in another aspect, the Ideas are what we think of as the Laws of Nature.[68]

The highest term in Coleridge's system is reason. Imagination is central to his system, mediating between understanding and the mind-independent Ideas of reason. While imagination is our most divine attribute for Coleridge, reason is not exactly a human attribute, but is something higher, towards which imagination aims. Thus in Coleridge, opposed here to Kant, reason is not our faculty, and Ideas of reason are better considered gifts. Siding with Plato, he contrasts Kantian Ideas as mental entities with Plato's objective view,

> Kant supposed the Ideas to be oscillations of the same imagination, which . . . produces the mathematical intuitions, line, circle, etc., a sort of total impression made by

[67] Cf. Bacon, [1605], Ch. XXV, 17: 'our Saviour Christ . . . not being like man, which knows man's thoughts by his words, but knowing man's thoughts immediately, He never answered their words, but their thoughts.' See Matthew, 12:25: 'And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.'

[68] It is nowadays clearly accepted, as it was too in Coleridge's day, that Laws of Nature are dynamic and, though unchanging, not static entities. Coleridge suggests that we think of Ideas in the same way, and that this is consistent with Plato's main arguments. This interpretation opposes those who read Platonic Ideas as static, lifeless entities, and cannot see them as 'living laws' and 'energies of reason'.

> successive constructions, each denied or negatived so soon as made, and yet the constructive power still beginning anew. Whereas, according to the true Platonic view, the Reason and Will are the Parent . . . and the Idea itself, the transcendent Analogon of the Imagination or spiritual intuition. (*Marginalia* V, 750-1)

In the history of ideas, although imagination has been neglected, its existence has never been expressly denied. Reason, however, as outlined by Coleridge, and as Plato's noûs, is a contested notion, and has often been denied. This contested reason is conceived as a mind-independent power analogous to natural laws. Attempts to explicate the reason referred to by Coleridge, reason distinguished, that is, from understanding go back to the Parmenidean distinction between Truth and Appearance; Heraclitean *logos*; Plato's *dianoia-noesis* distinction; to Plotinus; Boethius; and Spinoza's *natura naturans*, which notion Chapter 2.6 below will discuss in relation to the Coleridgean symbol. Heraclitus, observing that all use the same *logos*, yet each opines it as something individual shows the contradiction in denying reason's universality:

> Although this Logos is eternally valid, yet men are unable to understand it . . . although all things come to pass in accordance with this Logos, men seem to be quite without any experience of it . . . unaware of what they do when awake as they are when asleep. (Fragment 1)

And,

> We should let ourselves be guided by what is common to all. Yet, although the Logos is common to all, most men live as if each of them had a private intelligence of his own. (Fragment 2)

Heraclitus is here concerned with a universal *logos* upon which all individual instances of reasoning are dependent, consciously or otherwise. He is one of the founders of that Ancient Greek tradition that sees *logos* not simply as the operation of a thinking mind, but as the principle of order exemplified throughout the universe's very fabric, so that even the Sun cannot overstep its measure, or if it does, it will be rectified by the Erinyes (Furies), the handmaids of Justice (Fragment 29). It is to this notion of Idea understood as the Laws of Nature that we now turn.

2.5 Coleridgean Idea as Correlate of Natural Law

Coleridge argues that Laws of Nature are correlates of the Ideas of reason. Regardless of whether or not contemporary science has perfectly expressed any law, natural laws are principles that account for phenomena without themselves being phenomenal. Thus phenomena are explicable only by non-phenomenal laws, for which the phenomena count as evidence. As scientific inquiry approaches laws, we approach Ideas in aesthetic experience, in moral consideration, in other modes of contemplation.

The scientist, working with phenomena, tries to go through phenomena to the explanatory, formative principles. This 'beyond phenomena' is for Coleridge Law and Idea. He construes both as objective, with Law anteceding phenomena and considered in its being, and Idea the same considered as truth. As he puts it,

> The utmost we ever venture to say is, that the falling of an apple *suggested* the law of gravitation to Sir I. Newton. Now a law and an idea are correlative terms, and differ only as object and subject, as being and truth. (*Friend* I, 467n)

Coleridge argues that the scientist,[69] and not just the poet, painter, or Platonist, pursues Ideas, but under the aspect of Law. Thus, in his philosophical lectures, Coleridge describes Newtonian science in its purest pursuit, as labouring at a law, as theorizing in the contemplative sense:

> Nothing but the law was at all paid attention to; with the law dwelt power and prophecy, and by exclusive attention to the law it has been that late disciples of Sir Isaac Newton, Laplace, and others, have removed all the apparent difficulties in the theory of gravitation and turned them into the strongest confirmations . . . the progress of all great science is to labour at a law. (*Phil. Lects* II, 533)

This Law is much studied, never directly perceived, and is the same quarry of imagination as Idea, employing symbol in its retrieval. Science strays, like art, when fancy takes the lead over imagination. Then, hypotheses become hypostatized into fixed emblems, such as ether, or invisible string, rather than remaining with symbols of Ideas. Thus, when fancy takes over, a visualizing model stands in for, and is easily mistaken for, the non-phenomenal principle.

[69] Although he didn't use the term, he inspired its coinage by William Whewell, who reports from an 1833 meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science: '*Philosophers* was felt to be too wide and lofty a term, and was very properly forbidden them [i.e. mathematicians, physicists, and naturalists] by Mr. Coleridge, both in his capacity as philologer and metaphysician; *savans* was rather assuming, besides French instead of English; some ingenious gentlemen [Whewell himself!] proposed that, by analogy with *artist*, they might form *scientist*, and added that there could be no scruple to this term since we already have such words as *sciolist*, *economist* and *atheist*, but this was not generally palatable', Whewell, March 1834.

The falling of an apple can symbolize, as a consubstantial instance, Newtonian, or Einsteinian formulations of gravitation. Solar rays curving around Mercury can symbolize Einsteinian gravitation, serving better than the apple in exemplifying an effect that Newton's theory could not predict. Both symbolize gravitation, whether or not the ultimate scientific description of this law has been achieved. They symbolize with dynamic images of gravitation's phenomenal effects. As Coleridge put it, they are consubstantial with the universal Idea, in this case a natural law, which they convey by a clear instantiation.

Because a law has been well formulated, it does not follow that it is comprehended without residue or mystery. As Barfield comments, when Newton declared *hypothesis non fingo*, he:

> refused to seek 'behind' the law of gravitation for . . . explanations acceptable to a human understanding boggling at the impossible contradiction of 'action at a distance'. He left that to inferior scientists; and the law of gravitation is one of Coleridge's favourite illustrations of a 'law of nature,' as distinct from theory or hypothesis. Law differs from hypothesis, as idea differs from abstraction; just as an idea is not a notion 'of' . . . something other than itself, so a true law of nature is not a rule generated from particular observations of natural behaviour; it is nature behaving. An idea is neither an abstraction nor a thing, but a physical idea *is* at the same time a law of nature. We . . . therefore distinguish the idea or law itself from any uncontemplative notion of it. It is the *notion* of a law of gravity which gets fancied into invisible string. (Barfield, 1971, 125-6)

Barfield could have further explained that if hypothesized 'invisible string' were discovered, we would still need an organizing principle, a law, to account for its regular behaviour. According to this view, which Coleridge attributes to Bacon, the universe's intelligibility owes to those intelligibles referred to by Plato's Forms, but in their aspect as laws.

Gravity as a power, as a physical law, rather than its notion, remained mysterious to Newton. Having described gravitation, he concedes to acquiesce in its mystery, rather than posit any hypothesis or fanciful image that the understanding could comprehend. Similarly, while Einstein provides a more universal description of gravitational acceleration in modifying the concepts of space and time into curved space-time, he does not claim that he thereby provides a comprehensive understanding of what gravity is.

Coleridge defines a conception as 'a conscious act of the understanding' that brings any object in sense or recollection into a class with other members of common character such that we comprehend the thing and relate it with other classes of thing

(*Constitution*, 13). An Idea, however, cannot be abstracted from phenomena, because it is the reality of their laws. Coleridge adds that an awareness of this reality:

> may very well exist . . . and powerfully influence a man's thoughts and actions, without his being distinctly conscious of the same, much more without his being competent to express it in definite words. (Constitution, 12)

Thus,

> it is the privilege of a few to possess an idea: of the generality of men, it might be more truly affirmed that they are possessed by it. (Constitution, 13)

Coleridge refers to this active, dimly conscious, or unconscious, sense of Idea throughout his writings.

Coleridge's correlating Platonic Idea with Baconian natural law adds a persuasive dimension to his notion of Idea. While the Platonic Idea has always been a contested notion, natural law is far more generally accepted. Although Coleridge never stresses this persuasive point, it works implicitly in his correlating the two. If one accepts the reality of laws as non-phenomenal, one has already, the inference would go, accepted the existence of intelligible, non-sensible Ideas that are laws' correlates. Allying Idea with Baconian law, he distinguishes his notion of objective Ideas from Kant's construing them as subjective, regulating concepts.

Coleridge thus finds compelling support for Ideas in Baconian laws as objective, intelligible, and non-sensible:

> Hence too . . . Plato so often calls ideas LIVING LAWS, in which the mind has its whole true being and permanence; or that Bacon, vice versa, names the laws of nature, *ideas*; and represents . . . *facts of science* and *central phaenomena*, as signatures, impressions, and symbols of ideas. (*Friend* I, 492)

Bacon identifies central phenomena as representatives of laws and as symbols of Ideas. Following Bacon, Coleridge describes hypothesis as a 'symbol of an undiscovered law' and 'an exponential image or picture-language of an Idea' (*Friend* I, 477). As with the Coleridgean symbol, the particular phenomenon concretely represents the universal. Within a year of Coleridge writing the above passage on Bacon's notion of law as Idea pursued by scientific method, Goethe also writes about Bacon's method as collecting particulars in order to 'attain to Universals':[70]

[70] Baconian induction ascends, as Plato puts it in the Divided Line passage, collecting and synthesizing towards principles (*archai*). The very notion of method, *meta hodós* (Gk: after a way), is central to perennial philosophy, implying the progress, or procession, of Plato and the Neo-Platonists. N.b. Coleridge's periodical, *The Friend,* was written and published between

> In the range of phenomena all had equal value in Bacon's eyes. For although he himself always points out that one should collect the particulars only to select from them and to arrange them, in order finally to attain to Universals, yet too much privilege is granted to the single facts; and before it becomes possible to attain to simplification and conclusion by means of induction (the very way he recommends), life vanishes and forces get exhausted. He who cannot realize that one instance is often worth a thousand, bearing all within itself; he who proves unable to comprehend and esteem what we called ur-phenomena, will never be in a position to advance anything, either to his own or to others' joy and profit.

Goethe finds in Bacon's inductive science the same purpose of attaining to the universal through the particular that Coleridge recognizes, although Goethe does not refer to Bacon as Platonist, or reverse-Platonist, as Coleridge does. Although, Goethe finds in Bacon an eminent precedent, he acknowledges this less enthusiastically than his British counterpart. Despite Bacon's use of certain central phenomena to represent laws, his method gives a theoretically equal value to all facts as representatives of law, rather than privileging, as Goethe would, the central, or *Ur*-phenomena.

For Goethe, this democracy of equal value among the range of phenomena in Bacon's method lacks urgency. Certainly, the Living Law could in principle be among collections of single facts. However, treating all particulars at the same level risks, for Goethe, the 'life' in the living law that is more readily by selecting the most representative as ur-phenomena. Goethe thus acknowledges that all phenomena represent laws, but that some are more illustrative than others. Unlike Goethe, Coleridge is wholeheartedly excited by Bacon's reverse Platonism of empirical, deductive science. So long as the sensible particular exemplifies law, then it symbolizes it too, although considered selection would find more elegant, simpler representatives. The Baconian fact can, nevertheless, symbolically represent the law because it is consubstantial with it and all its other instantiations.

Coleridge suggests also that the Pythagorean harmony of the spheres born of number and ratio expresses his notion of Idea and law as correlates. He suggests this as key to understanding Pythagoras' insight, first stimulated, legend has it, by his marvelling at the mathematical ratios sensibly intuited as musical notes when a blacksmith stuck a rod gripped at different intervals, with each musical chime perfectly harmonized in the listener's mind with the mathematical ratio of the grip that divided the rod. The qualia and the Ideas of reason,

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1809 and 1810. Goethe's *Theory of Colour* [*Farbenlehre*] was published in 1810.

> must necessarily be of the same nature . . . with those of the universe which acted upon him and which he alone was capable of beholding . . . . He therefore supposed that what in *men* the ideas were, . . . those in the *world* were the laws; that the ideas partook according to the power of the man, of a constitutive character, in the same manner as the laws did in external nature. (*Phil. Lects*, 111-2; 107-8)

It is widely admitted that there is an objective power or force corresponding, as something actual, to the description of a natural law. Therefore it is widely understood that this law is something real and not a convenient, temporary fiction of science functioning only as a conceptual placeholder. One can accept this while allowing that descriptions of scientific laws are defeasible; the final word on any particular law is likely still unwritten, nevertheless, the objectivity of the law as something described is generally accepted. Correlating Idea and law perfectly conveyed Coleridge's sense of Ideas as objective realities, and denying this objectivity differentiates Kant's Idea from Ideas in Plato, Plotinus, and Coleridge.

As Coleridge more than once remarks, the same Idea in two minds is *the same* Idea, and not two different conceptions. The expressions, conceptions, images, and phenomena under the unitary Idea are many, just as the expressions, conceptions, images, and phenomena of gravitation are many. Yet it is readily accepted that despite the many and apparently various phenomena of gravitation, it is one, and it is objective. Grasp this unity and objectivity in terms of natural law relative to phenomena, Coleridge argues, and you grasp the unity and objectivity of Idea, as distinct from conception and image, and relative to its instantiations. As laws order and animate the world into a dynamic cosmos that is, in some degree, scientifically intelligible, Ideas animate phenomena and draw contemplative minds towards greater appreciation of existence and transcendent meaning, that is, of what is true, good, and beautiful.

When Coleridge discusses Ideas as correlative of laws, it can be surprising to find him describe Bacon as the British Plato (*Friend* I, 488; *Constitution*, Introduction). The first destroyer of classical idols, advancing experimental method, is not usually considered a Platonist. Coleridge lays some reason for this at Bacon's door:

> Lord Bacon . . . taught pure Platonism in his *great* work, the *Novum Organon*, and abuses his divine predecessor for fantastic nonsense which he [Plato] had been the first to explode.' (*Letters* V, January 14th, 1820)

Bacon, he proposes, invents a reverse Platonism of things, while Plato applies his method and system to words. Bacon's scientific method is inductive, revealing laws exemplified in phenomena. Plato's method moves towards Ideas, or to *aporia* if this

fails, also applying induction, but to conceptions and definitions emerging from discussion. As Wheeler (2001) notes, Bacon envisions science moving from phenomena to real, non-phenomenal law:

> Bacon's term for this generalized noumenal law was 'Form', which at first glance appears to be a Platonism. It is, in the way that Marx was a Hegelian. . . . Form has had a chequered career among Baconians and historians of science but to ignore its foundation misses the force and novelty of Bacon's invention, and the semiotic nature of his philosophy of scientific empiricism. 'Form' refers to implicit structure and is most familiar from Plato's distinction between ideal Form and 'appearances'. Bacon adapts it to refer to an empirical phenomenological scientific law.

Wheeler conjectures that Bacon's legal training leads him to this method, as 'Bacon started from law rather than mathematics. He studied the deep structure of systems rather than motion and time-sequences.' Bacon's endeavour to uncover the natural, or unwritten law, operating as a principle throughout both written and case law parallels his reverse Platonism in seeking the non-phenomenal laws operating throughout phenomena. Thus Bacon seeks the:

> law behind the ruling in a judgment at the English 'unwritten' common law. Bacon's science looks for that kind of 'thingness' in all departments of the environment, social as well as natural (Wheeler, 2001)

Pursuing Bacon as a Platonist of things instead of Ideas, applying inductive method to phenomena instead of arguments, and definitions, Wheeler writes,

> The mind, Bacon said, sounding like Plato, is by its truest and deepest nature, the 'form of forms.' Hence if properly used it is potentially capable of decoding nature's hidden 'abecedarium'. (Wheeler, 2001)

According to this view, as civil and criminal law indicate a higher and logically prior unwritten law, the alphabet of nature is similarly amenable to inductive investigation. Bacon's ideal of reading this alphabet holds poetic appeal for Coleridge. Part of this appeal lies in Bacon's reference to the non-sensible, intelligible Form inductively sought through the empirical objects of observation. Thus Coleridge finds Bacon, like Plato, to hold, contrary to the Empiricists, that truth 'may indeed be revealed to us *through* and *with*, but never *by* the senses' (*Friend* I, 492).

Another appeal might lie in Bacon's turning Plato right side up again, to borrow Marx's phrase, with respect to Laws of Nature, so that Form is sought through phenomena, as Plotinus also proposes (with respect to aesthetics), rather than through verbal discourse and dialectic. In this vein, Coleridge considers human freedom as aiming to view,

> Through meaner powers and secondary things
> Effulgent, as through clouds that veil his blaze.
> For all that meets the bodily sense I deem
> Symbolical, one mighty alphabet
> For infant minds; and we in this low world
> Placed with our backs to bright Reality,
> That we may learn with young unwounded ken
> The substance from its shadow. ('Destiny of Nations', *Poetical Works* I.1, 291)

Coleridge emphasizes that Bacon seeks the non-phenomenal laws behind phenomena. As such, he cannot be identified with an Empiricism that holds all we know and can know to be contained within sense impressions. Bacon's sense of the Laws of Nature having objective reality is a model for Coleridge's sense of the reality of Ideas. Baconian Law, like Coleridgean Idea, which reiterates Platonic and Neo-Platonic formulations of Idea, is to be approached, and not to be hypothesized as some conception. As Bacon (*The Advancement of Learning*, Bk. II [1605], ed. Vickers, 2002) suggests, humbly and yet confidently avoiding mystification, we may ultimately find ourselves incapable of truly understanding laws:

> For knowledges are as pyramides, whereof history is the basis. So of Natural Philosophy, the basis is Natural History; the stage next the basis is Physic; the stage next the vertical point is Metaphysic. As for the vertical point, '*Opus quod operatur Deus à principio usque ad finem*',[71] the Summary Law of Nature, we know not whether man's enquiry can attain unto it. (Bacon [1605], ed. Vickers, 2002, 197)

[71] Latin: *Ecclesiastes* 3:11, '[No man can find out] the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.'

2.6 Coleridgean Idea Conveyed by Symbol

Coleridgean Ideas are best conveyed through symbols. For Coleridge, imagination's role in the economy of thought is to approach Ideas of reason and present them to a thereby enlightened understanding. The imagination may create symbols in its own approach towards Ideas, and has recourse to nothing other than symbols to later convey those Ideas aesthetically, whether the expression be religious, in high art, popular culture, or in everyday aesthetic expression, such as in a love letter, a gift, and an the development of an individuals manners. Without symbols, the attempt to convey Ideas produces silence or mere gesture, either deeply felt but incoherent, or superficial and obviously inadequate.

In poetry, and in aesthetic experience in general, imagination represents Ideas through symbols. Distinguishing what he means by symbol, Coleridge presents allegory as a product of mechanical understanding translating abstract notions into picture-language. Coleridge defines allegory as:

> the employment of one set of agents and images to convey in disguise a moral meaning, with a likeness to the imagination, but with a difference to the understanding,—those agents and images being so combined as to form a homogeneous whole. (*Lit. Lects*: Lecture on Spenser)

Abstract notions derive from sense experience and their allegorical representation merely rephrases them, lending nothing to their understanding. Thus for Coleridge, allegory is a 'phantom proxy' (*Statesman's Manual*, 437) standing in for an equally shadowy show of phenomena with no principle sought to explain their unity or value. Coleridge contrasts allegory with the symbol in his classic Romantic definition:

> a Symbol (*ho estin aei tautegorikon*) is characterized by a translucence of the Special in the Individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General. Above all by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative. (*Statesman's Manual*, 30)

The parenthetic Greek means, 'which is always tautegorical'. '*Tauto*' means 'the same', so the symbol 'gathers the same'. 'Tautegorical' is one of Coleridge's neologisms. It distinguishes the symbol, which is tautegorical, from metaphor and simile, which are allegorical. Elsewhere Coleridge explains:

> The *base* of Symbols and symbolical expressions**;** the nature of which is always *taute*gorical, that is, expressing *the same* subject but with a *difference*, in contra-distinction from metaphors and similitudes, that are always *alle*gorical, that is expressing a *different* subject but with a resemblance. (*Reflection*, 206)

To consider what it means to assert the symbol as 'always *taute*gorical', and 'metaphors and similitudes' as 'always *alle*gorical', we can begin by examining how this difference is sometimes misunderstood. Rosen and Zerner (1985, 26) defend Coleridge against Wellek's charge that by being metonymical, but not metaphorical, Coleridge's symbol was not a proper symbol. In asserting, against Wellek, that Coleridge's symbol is indeed a metaphor, and 'is clearly and intentionally both', Rosen and Zerner nevertheless miss the point as much as Wellek does.

On the technical point of whether or not Coleridgean symbols are metaphors, Wellek has the advantage over Rosen and Zerner: The Coleridgean symbol is not a metaphor. Coleridge's symbol always expresses '*the same* subject, but with a difference', whereas the metaphor (Gk. *meta phorein*) carries meaning beyond that same subject to a different subject, which it nevertheless resembles. Wellek begs the question, however, in assuming that symbols must be metaphors. He thus fails to understand Coleridge's points that metaphor and analogy belong to the same species, that their borrowed significances will inevitably diverge *ad absurdum* from their intended meanings, that they are opaque and unreliable proxies for what they represent, and that a true symbol is a part of that which it renders intelligible. Coleridge, like any writer, will often use metaphor and analogy, but he sees them as second best, a kind of pedagogical refreshment:

> Even as illustrations, pretended Analogies are deceptive. The best excuse would be to consider them as Flowers by the road side, which tho' they delay the Traveller in each instance yet by refreshing his mind may accelerate his progress on the whole.—(*Marginalia* V, 780)

In *Reflection*, he describes the symbol as:

> a sign included in the Idea which it represents . . . an actual part chosen to represent the whole. (*Reflection*, 263)

Among his examples are actual parts taken as synecdoches, such as a lower lip and prominent chin representing Man, and an example of a lower type taken to represent the higher, such as the instinct of bees or ants symbolizing the human understanding. His symbol always offers a simpler instantiation of a complex reality, with the particular offering an ascent to the more rarefied general. The symbol thus unites image and Idea in imagination.

Unlike analogy or metaphor, which, to reiterate, Coleridge shows to be the basic type of analogy, the symbol needs no translation, being consubstantial with the Idea

represented. Again, unlike metaphor, 'a Coleridgean symbol is not a sign, if we mean by sign . . . an *arbitrary* relationship, a unity of meaning agreed upon by convention' (Cutsinger, 1987, 77-8). Thus, to take a poetic example from Burns that Coleridge twice references (see page 206, below), snow melting on a river is a symbol that transcends cultural boundaries, directly presenting momentary existence dissipating the instant it is seized. Thus snow is seized and dissipated by a river; poppies by the hand that takes them; and fleeting pleasures by the understanding. Symbol, then, is universal and poetic, where metaphor is conventional and mechanic. Metaphor, reliant on dualistic understanding, requires a translator's code, which cultures usually instil, and while many of these metaphorical codes are held in common, symbol transcends such codes altogether, in transcending such duality of meaning.

In recent philosophy, appreciation of the importance of metaphor in understanding has increased. Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* importantly exemplifies this appreciation of understanding as metaphorical, especially in its metaphor of the river-bed:

> The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other. (*OC*, §97)

The river-bed metaphorically represents more slowly evolving beliefs or propositions. These 'foundational' beliefs evolve slowly, that is, relative to the fast-flowing water and debris. The river-bed nevertheless interchanges particles with the river, so that all are part of the same fluidity. This, and many other examples, especially in the later Wittgenstein, gives a metaphorical understanding of understanding as metaphorical, medial, and perhaps necessarily shifting.

In cognitive linguistics, too, Lakoff and Johnson argue the very strong position that understanding only ever occurs through metaphors (1980), and that this requirement to understand via analogized images is necessary because the human mind is an embodied mind (1999). Such recognition of complex and abstract thought requiring imagery in concrete terms is thoroughly consonant with Coleridge's position. For Coleridge, however, appreciating the all-important role of allegorical thinking in the understanding is not enough, and, moreover, this insufficiency is dangerous.

That the Coleridgean understanding is always allegorical, then, is a position that arguably finds support in Wittgenstein, and is very strongly and explicitly supported in Lakoff and Johnson. Coleridge, however, goes further than these modern thinkers, and argues how imagination and its symbols are always tautegorical, such that symbols non-

metaphorically, because consubstantially, present (rather than represent) the object of thought. He argues that the understanding's metaphorizing work adds an opacity to thought between the mind and its objects, and that merely paralleling phenomena, relations, and abstract notions (though even this is no mean task, but is in fact the essence of reflectivity) is just to restate appearances in another idiom, and not to get closer to their more fundamental reality. Understanding, then, half knows its objects by being able to think them in different terms. It is thus very rhetorical, being able to change its metaphors to use the kinds of images its different audiences already understand.

While awakening imagination enlightens with Ideas, the understanding, lacking symbolic translucency, schematizes concepts that opaquely represent rather than translucently reveal. Moreover, conceptual understanding too easily falls into cliché, thus further concealing its objects with the film of familiarity. Unlike symbolic participation, conceptual understanding, in the manufacture of its analogical images, presents a distance between its cognition and the object or relation cognized. As Berlin (1999, 120) agrees:

> 'Understanding' always presupposes the understander and the understood, the knower and the known, some kind of gap between the subject and the object.

Restoring the freshness of enlivened perception is, then, the task of imaginative genius, which gains in directness and suggestive vividness while it loses in distinctness and conceptual clarity.

Far from abandoning fecund imagination to focus on what some commentators view as the drier subject of Idea in his later writings, Coleridge calls upon the symbolic imagination as the very principle of intelligibility. I oppose the view, expressed by Whale (2000, 167), that Coleridge's 'subscription to the "Idea" puts a particular squeeze on imagination'.[72] That the later Coleridge renounces imagination as he delves deeper into the driest deserts of metaphysics, as some might consider it, is most fully framed in Boulger's (1961) argument that Coleridge wholly abandons imagination. This position is no longer tenable now that the *Collected Coleridge* is complete. One later statement of the later Coleridge's maintaining his theory of imagination explicitly relies on his Fancy-Imagination distinction, namely the marginal note to Coleridge's Copy B (see *Marginalia* IV, 593, for a physical description of this British-Library-held book

[72] Vigus (2005, 86-7), also argues that Coleridge abandons imagination for Ideas after *Biographia*, 1817.

published in 1824) of Scott's *The Monastery* in which Coleridge writes,

> This Chapter might be chosen by a philosophical Critic to point out and exemplify the difference between Fancy and Imagination. Here is the abundance of the former with the blankest absence of the latter. (*Marginalia* IV, 596)

Unlike writers such as Boulger, Vigus and Whale, I hold, citing not only statements of Coleridge like the one just quoted, but also arguing from the important, if often implicit, role the Coleridgean theory of a symbolizing imagination that approaches and aestheticizes Ideas performs in the later Coleridge's theory of Ideas. I argue, then, specifically that the imagination always retains an important role in Coleridge's later work concerning Ideas, because imagination is necessary in framing the symbol, which is needed to approach and convey Ideas aesthetically. This constitutes a strong argument against the view that the later Coleridge abandons the imagination.

A more straightforward and conclusive argument that Coleridge does not abandon his thoughts on the importance of imagination in his later years is that several entries in *Notebooks* 5, written in the last seven years of his life, refer to imagination as a higher mental faculty. One such entry of 1833 describes humour as:

> the power of making the Peculiar Universal . . . of giving . . . objective Value to a subjective individuality [or] anomaly. . . . It is the Organization of the Adlibitive by the Rational, and hence always implies the Imagination, as the modifying Power. (*Notebooks*, 6995)

Another 1833 notebook entry emphasizes the imagination's importance in a discussion of the superiority of subtle distinction over acute division:

> In Nature I find no Acuteness, no correlative to Wit; but infinite Subtlety, and every where Correlatives to Reason & Imagination. (*Notebooks* 5, 6740)

These entries demonstrating that imagination retains its importance for Coleridge have been selected almost at random from the later Notebooks. *Notebooks* 4, 4692 is another such example. It is a pity that Notebooks 4 and 5 are not indexed by subject, but only by place, and author. Reference to these valuable texts, however is certain to be enhanced and increased when their digitization is complete.

I have shown, then, from both (a) the theoretical necessity of imagination in approaching Ideas, and from (b) direct quotation, that imagination's status in no way diminishes as Coleridge develops his philosophy of Ideas. We should therefore clearly see that Coleridge's earlier work on imagination leads to and is retained in his theory of the symbol, whereby the aesthetic imagination that conveys Ideas through symbols

mediates between the objectively real Ideas of reason and the faculties of fancy and understanding, which are based in sense perception. The later Coleridge focus on Ideas is, by his own account, only achieved by means of the aestheticizing, poetic imagination, without which Ideas can mean nothing to us.

Throughout Coleridge's writings, imagination, with its aesthetic, value-interpretive perceptions and creative endeavours, is never superior to the Ideas of reason whose aesthetic and philosophical conveyance is imagination's highest and only true end. Coleridgean symbols work not only in poetic composition, or in contemplating natural laws; they are active in aesthetic experience generally. In such experiences as looking around oneself while thinking, the things around us can take on a symbolic aspect, and a heightened sense of the vista can be felt through the 'living *educts* of the Imagination' (*Statesman's Manual*, 28-9).

Coleridge carefully describes this experience, noticing that when he looks at a flower, or a tree,

> And with particular reference to that undivided Reason . . . I seem to myself to behold in the quiet objects, on which I am gazing, more than an arbitrary illusion, more than a mere *simile,* the work of my own fancy. I feel an awe, as if there were before my eyes the same power as that of the REASON—the same power in a lower dignity, and therefore a symbol established in the truth of things. (*Statesman's Manual*, 71-2)

Here the symbolizing imagination allows an Idea to shine through sensuous appearance, lending beauty and poetic significance derived from the universal value (the Ideal) to be made apparent and relevant to human life through the particular.[73] The symbolizing imagination thus uses the poetic visionary mode of translucence to see the Ideal in and through the phenomenal. Coleridgean symbols do not therefore stand for, or represent, Ideas or anything else. Rather, they remain what they are, but are seen now revealed as more fully what they are, and as being, and not just representing, instantiations or traces of values in the human or otherwise natural working out of the world in relation to Ideality. This Ideality can be conceived mathematically, or scientifically in terms of the Laws of Nature, or in Platonist terms of ethical and aesthetic values, ultimate standards, and perfections.

The Coleridgean symbol, then, can be helpfully compared to what Suzuki (1934, 256) calls 'double exposure', whereby one sees simultaneously (a) the surrounding world of ordinary things, filmed with their dust and patina, often quite humble, and

[73] Halmi (2002, 86) proposes that the Romantic concern with symbolism lies in addressing the question: 'how can we be sure that nature is naturally meaningful to humanity?'

certainly showing many imperfections, and (b) an enlightened vision of profound and universal significance that leaves everything as it is. Although the Laws of Nature are not themselves phenomena, phenomena of nature are our only visible or otherwise sensible access through which we may think these Laws. The imaginative natural scientist, then, would see not only phenomena as naturally occurent behaviour, but, with nothing removed from the ordinary vision, would also see in and through these phenomena a scintillatingly beautiful, profoundly moving vision of Ideal reality. As Husserl straightforwardly proposes, in a passage that nevertheless suggests a *kōan* for appreciating the Coleridgean symbol as it applies to Laws of Nature, if there were no matter, there would still be a Law of gravitation:

> If all gravitating masses were destroyed, the law of gravitation would not thereby be suspended: it would merely remain without the possibility of factual application. For it tells us nothing regarding the existence of gravitating masses, but only about that which pertains to gravitating masses as such. ([1913, 149n.] 1970, 164)

The Platonist point that Husserl makes here is that laws are still true and valid even if there is nothing for them to determine. Expressed plainly and soberly, laws are modal and support counterfactuals, so it is possible in principle for them to have no manifestations. This sober expression, however, leaves unanswered some very important, and perhaps unanswerable, questions. Ontologically, exactly what is a natural law? What is its mode of being? What is it that it rules over and how does it determine what is possible and what becomes actual? Such questioning can lead one to contemplate beauty beyond phenomenal being, in Ideality, in ways that Russell (1917, 125-6) suggests when he says that:

> Mathematics, rightly viewed, possesses not only truth, but supreme beauty . . . without the gorgeous trappings of painting or music, yet sublimely pure, and capable of a stern perfection such as only the greatest art can show. The true spirit of delight, the exaltation, the sense of being more than man, which is the touchstone of the highest excellence, is to be found in mathematics as surely as in poetry.

We return to the double aspect of the Coleridgean symbol, having thought around the subject by looking at Suzuki's double exposure; Husserl's gravitation without matter; and Russell's sense of mathematical beauty lying in its sternly mind-transcending perfection, that is nevertheless appreciable by the human minds it transcends. To understand how the Coleridgean symbol reveals something beyond itself without representing anything, we should now consider the distinction between *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*.

This venerable distinction is supported by the insight, traceable to Plato, and through Bacon, Bruno, and Spinoza, that the laws of phenomena are not themselves phenomena.[74] Bacon writes of the Form, or Idea, which he also calls Law, as *natura naturans* and the *fons emanationis* (*Novum Organon*, II, i). Robertson (1905, 18) comments that Bacon's '*natura naturans*' expresses 'the relation in which the Form stands to the phenomenal nature which results from it.'

To Sense, Fancy, and unenlightened Understanding, natural phenomena are seen as *natura naturata*, as nature natured, and as fixed and dead relative to *natura naturans*. When observed, however, through imagination's symbolic mode, primary imagination combines sensation not only with categorizing concepts, but also under the Idea of *natura naturans*, or nature naturing, which Coleridge explains as 'Nature in the active sense' (*Phil. Lects*, 370). Thus universal law is appreciated in imaginative experience that allows the particular to symbolize the universal, and thus transform the percept and its concept into the symbolic, experienced within the aspect of transcendence in virtue of being 'symbols of Noumena' (*Notebooks* 2, 2664).

Kaiser (1994, 142-3) describes imagination's symbolic movement as a process of mediation:

> Coleridge holds up the Imagination as the mediator between the material world of the senses and the immaterial world of Ideas apprehended by Reason, the mediator that joins these two worlds through symbols . . . . For Coleridge, symbols thus embody the physical particulars, and express the universal Idea at the same time; they 'enunciate the whole', as he puts it.

Symbol holds a similar place in his aesthetic system as *Geist* in Kant's aesthetic. To reiterate, Kant's *Geist* animates the mind and gives life to the work. It is the ability to present aesthetic ideas that provoke much thought that cannot be adequately comprehended by the concepts of the understanding. Coleridgean symbol serves the same role in presenting symbols that convey Ideas of reason that remain beyond of the conceptual grasp and schematizing of the understanding. However, Coleridge also provides a frame for symbolic imagination to transform everyday aesthetic experience, and not just the works of artistic genius.

He describes the symbol as *forma informans*, using the term from the Latinized Aristotle, for whom it referred to the soul as an informing form, giving form to the matter of the body. As *forma informans,* the Coleridgean symbol is always active. It

[74] The terms are Latinized from Aristotle's *On the Heavens*.

guides perception in primary imagination, adding – he says in 1814, a year before commencing *Biographia* – significances, purposes, and values to the experience of life, subjecting:

> matter to spirit so as to be transformed into a symbol in and through which the spirit reveals itself. (*SWF*, 353-386)

Coleridgean aesthetic experience is imagination giving sensuous shape to Ideas. Indeed he holds that,

> an Idea in the highest sense of that word, cannot be conveyed but by a symbol. (*Biographia* I, 156)

Thus imagination bodies the universal in the individual and, always evocative, the symbol continues to oscillate between the sensuous and the Ideal.

Describing the symbolizing imagination as embodying Idea, he writes,

> Something there must be to realize the form, something in and by which the *forma informans* reveals itself: and these, less than any that could be substituted, and in the least possible degree, distract the attention, in the least possible degree obscure the idea, of which they (composed of outline and surface) are the symbol. (*SWF*, 377)

Here is the secondary imagination as a shaping power, careful neither to distract with the sensuous, nor to obscure the Idea conveyed. Offering an image of a crystal held in the light as a symbol of what the symbol itself is doing, he writes,

> An illustrative hint may be taken from a pure crystal, as compared with an opaque, semiopaque or clouded mass, on the one hand, and with a perfectly transparent body, such as the air, on the other. The crystal is lost in the light, which yet it contains, embodies, gives shape to, but which passes shapeless through the air, and, in a ruder body, is either quenched or dissipated. (*SWF*, 377)

Passing through air, the light cannot be held up and seen as light. Similarly, an Idea cannot be transparently conveyed. Attempts to convey an Idea transparently collapse in empty gestures, hand-waving and mumbles. Again, holding an opaque body in the air obscures the light at least shows there is light, by only by occluding it. The pure crystal, representing the symbol, is 'lost in the light which yet it contains, embodies, gives shape to' (*SWF*, 377). Thus the Idea, whose light would otherwise 'pass shapeless through the air', or be 'quenched or dissipated' 'in a ruder body', becomes meaningful for us through aesthetic form.

2.7 Idea in History: Civilization and Cultivation

> In the unfolding and exposition of any idea, we naturally seek assistance and the means of illustration from the historical instance, in which it has been most nearly realized (*Constitution*, 35-6)

Showing that Idea works through history, Coleridge argues that the permanency of a nation, its progressiveness, and the security of personal freedom are grounded in the necessary, antecedent condition of progressive cultivation. Civilization alone, however, might likely as not hinder personal freedom:

> But civilization is itself but a mixed good, if not far more a corrupting influence, the hectic of disease, not the bloom of health, and a nation so distinguished more fitly to be called a varnished than a polished people, where this civilization is not grounded in cultivation, in the harmonious development of those qualities and faculties that characterize our humanity. (*Constitution*, 42-3)

He makes the same argument in terms of education, and now showing the dangers of over-civilization, saying that the young people of this highly civilizing age are becoming:

> most anxiously and expensively be-school-mastered, be-tutored, be-lectured, anything but *educated*; who have received arms and ammunition instead of skill, strength and courage; varnished rather than polished; perilously over-civilized, and most piteously uncultivated! (*Friend* I, 500)

This crucial but easily overlooked distinction between civilization and cultivation becomes central in Romanticism, especially in anti-Utilitarian arguments. Before Coleridge, Burke (1790, §166) understands civilization to drive the Enlightenment ideal of inevitable progress:

> Without . . . civil society man could not by any possibility arrive at the perfection of which his nature is capable, nor even make a faint approach to it.

In his aforementioned essay on Coleridge, Mill (1840, 141-2) takes Coleridge's civilization-cultivation distinction to show how Romanticism is distinguished from utilitarian, bureaucratizing, Enlightenment tendencies:

> Take for instance the question how far mankind have gained by civilization. One observer is forcibly struck by the multiplication of physical comforts; the advancement and diffusion of knowledge; the decay of superstition; the facilities of mutual intercourse; the softening of manners; the decline of war and personal conflict; the progressive limitation of the tyranny of the strong over the weak; the great works accomplished throughout the globe by the cooperation of multitudes

Mill then asks the reader to consider 'the high price which is paid' for 'the value of these advantages',

> the relaxation of individual energies and courage; the loss of . . . self-relying independence; the slavery . . . to artificial wants; their effeminate shrinkage from even the shadow of pain; the . . . monotony of their lives . . . and absence of any marked individuality . . . ; the contrast between the narrow, mechanical understanding, produced by a life spent in executing by fixed rules a fixed task, and the varied powers of the man of the woods . . . and the sufferings of the great mass of the people of civilized countries . . . while they are bound by a thousand fetters in lieu of the freedom and excitement which are its compensations.

The high price paid is a diminished cultivation; increased bureaucracy and technocracy; and a reduction in the freedoms of self-realization, of independence, and of aesthetic explorations.

On the Constitution of Church and State According to the Idea of Each (1829) is the work in which Coleridge traces: the development of nationality; permanence through landed interest; progression through personal interest of the mercantile, commercial, and professional classes; duties; and freedoms, as the realization of Ideas in history. His thesis here is strikingly Hegelian, which similarity I suggest stems from a shared disavowal of Kant's transcendental Ideas as subjective projections, rather than objective, constitutive principles. Both see history as Ideas transforming the world. Perhaps drawing from Bacon's inductive studies of legal precedence and case law to show that there is an unwritten, or only partially explicit, Natural Law that gradually becomes manifest in nations,[75] Coleridge understands the British Constitution as an Idea. Hence,

> In the same sense that the sciences of arithmetic and geometry, that Mind, that Life itself, have reality; the Constitution has real existence, and does not the less exist in reality, because it both *is*, and *exists as*, an IDEA. (*Constitution*, 19)

Although constitutional law is a rational object benefiting all, it unfolds gradually through the balance of different social groups. For Coleridge, powerful or influential groups and individuals have a duty to ensure a proper balance between progression and permanence, with the former advancing civilization, technology, and technicalities and the latter maintaining cultivation and the sense of humanity. Progress is ensured by the Constitution of the State, and deals with transience, of which property is a clear example; the Constitution of the Nation is discovered by reason, seeks the Ideals that secure permanence, and cultivates these Ideals in national character and soul. The changing but developing governments represent the State, and the Church represents the Nation.

[75] Bacon ([1597] 1978) explains the principles of English law as deriving from common law, which may be understood, like Laws of Nature, inductively.

Coleridge adapts three lines from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* for his epigraph to *Constitution*:

> There is a mystery in the soul of the State
> Which hath an operation more divine
> Than our mere chroniclers meddle with

The mystery in the State's soul is that it is drawn by guiding Ideas invisible to the lower understanding, the historians of which merely chronicle *natura naturata*, rather than recognize *natura naturans* in the principles connecting events. Kooy (1999) comments that:

> his historiography [is] the notion that ideas make history and that the way to get at these ideas is aesthetically.

In Coleridge's day, ideas as historical, movement-causing themes, begin to be seen as unstoppable motors of social and political change. Once Ideas become manifest in the network of history, they become laws. Indeed a *Zeitgeist* was pervading Europe, with Romantic Nationalism elevating, sometimes even inventing, folklore and traditions; sweeping into creation the states of Germany, Italy, Poland, Greece, Bulgaria, and Hungary; and inspiring independence movements in European colonies around the globe. Thus Coleridge writes,

> Shall I compare thee to poor Poland's Hope,
> Bright flower of Hope kill'd in the opening bud?
> ('On Observing a Blossom', *Sibylline Leaves*, 174)

These lines most likely refer to Russia's occupation of the pro-Napoleonic Duchy of Warsaw territories in 1813, after routing French Imperial troops, and thereby dashing Polish nationalist hope.

Nevertheless, for Coleridge this progression of national civilization requires cultivation if it is to have moral and humane value. Cultivation of souls occurs with 'the annunciation of *principles*, of *ideas*' (*Statesman's Manual*, 24), which is the true end of government. As Gregory (2003, 96) explains,

> For Coleridge, . . . [the historical conveyance of] ideas . . . awakens the mind's germinal power to the consubstantialities of past and present, [and thus] contributes to the creation of social and political community.

understanding, or 'the Faculty of means to medial ends' (*Constitution*, 59), advances Britain's physical infrastructure in the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, in an unprecedented advance of organized civilization. Coleridge cites,

> Inventions, Discoveries, Public Improvements, Docks, Rail-Ways, Canals, &c . . . in England and Scotland. . . . We live, I exclaimed, under the dynasty of the understanding: and this is its golden age. (*Constitution*, 59)

Without, however, equal cultivation toward ultimate ends, comes cultural emptiness seeing medial ends only.

> Sea, and Land, Rock, Mountain, Lake and Moor, yea Nature and all her Elements, sink before them, or yield themselves captive! But the *ultimate* ends? Where shall I seek for information concerning these? By what name shall I seek for the historiographer of REASON? Where shall I find the annals of *her* recent campaigns? The records of her conquests? In the facts disclosed by the records of the Mendicity Society? In the reports on the increase of crimes, commitments? In the proceedings of the Police? Or in the accumulating volumes on the horrors and perils of population? (*Constitution*, 59-60)

Coleridge identifies the imbalance of medial conceptions outweighing ultimate Ideals nineteen years earlier, in *Friend*, when he writes that:

> a nation can never be a too cultivated, but may easily become an over-civilized race. (*Constitution*, 49)[76]

In *Constitution* (69), he recommends a national clerisy to disseminate the liberal arts and sciences as 'an essential element of a rightly constituted nation' to secure both the permanence and the progression of a nation. Coleridge is often cited as coining 'clerisy', which he does, although Shaffer (2000, 148) implies he effectively translates Kant's *Klerisei*. Although *Klerisei* is standard German for *clergy*, and no Kantian coinage, Kant does propose an idealizing church of Reason that frees faith from historical forms and directs it towards true moral law, and we can agree with Shaffer that this is very likely the source of Coleridge's notion.[77] Coleridge's development of the clerisy idea in 1829, representing a stable intelligentsia to ensure a steady cultivation of humanity to counter-balance the technological progressions of civilization, echoes his three-decades earlier 'Religious Musings', composed in 1794 and finished in 1796:

> O'er waken'd realms Philosophers and Bards
> Spread in concentric circles; they whose souls
> Conscious of their high dignities from God
> Brook not wealth's rivalry. (*Poetical Works* I.1, 61)

While his clerisy notion derives from Kant's suggestion, Coleridge's development of it coincides with the ascetically non-materialistic philosophical class of Plato's *Republic*. Coleridge applies the notion in a trenchant critique of his age's materialism and

[76] Repeating a sentence from *Friend* I, 500. Cf., *Friend* I, 494, where Coleridge introduces his civilization-cultivation distinction.
[77] For Kant's 'church of Reason', see his *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* [1793].

utilitarianism, and bemoans, for example, 'lecture-bazaars under the absurd name of universities' as 'spurious', and as feeding the disease they set out to cure (*Constitution,* 69). A national education should come from the font of Ideas, and not from the 'attempt to *popularize* science', which might well 'only effect its *plebification*' (*Constitution,* 70). Coleridge, with Plato, describes Ideas as,

> distinguished *in kind* from logical and mathematical truths (*Constitution*, 47)

Ideas, then, are:

> the truths of philosophy, . . . objects whose actual subsistence is *implied* in their idea, though only *by* the idea revealable. (*Constitution*, 47)

Paraphrasing St John's Gospel, Coleridge calls Ideas:

> "spiritual realities that can only be spiritually discerned" (*Constitution,* 47, Coleridge's quotation marks)

These are the cultivating Ideas, constituting humanity in its relation to:

> God, eternity, freedom, will, absolute truth, of the good, the true, the beautiful, the infinite. (*Constitution*, 47)

As in Socrates' convictions expressed in the *Parmenides*, the Ideas transcend our humanity and are constitutive of it, being the Form of all value. Thus our deepest feelings resonate with the highest intellectual principles, and Coleridge thus describes:

> deep feelings which belong, as by a natural right to those obscure ideas that are necessary to the moral perfection of the human being (*Friend* I, 106)

These Ideas necessary for moral perfection are now given as:

> Being, Form, Life, the Law of Conscience, God, Reason, Freedom, Immortality (*Friend* I, 106)

Contemplating these transcendental, non-abstracted Ideas one can:

> rightly appreciate, the permanent *distinction* and occasional *contrast*, between cultivation and civilization. (*Friend* I, 106)

Like Hegel, Coleridge describes the oft-faltering development of Idea in history as unfolding from the bud. Coleridge's first use of this image, six years after Hegel's, is in his Shakespearean criticism, delivering a lecture in 1813. He describes education as a calling to growth, or a Socratic assistance in giving birth, and is thus:

> to educe, to call forth, as the blossom is educed from the bud. The vital excellences are within; the acorn is but educed or brought forth from the bud (*Lit. Lects* I, 585)

Hegel ([1807] 1977, 68) uses the image of ‘the bud’ ‘broken through’ by the blossom, which is itself ‘refuted’ by the fruit in showing these moments as a rational unfolding of an ‘organic unity’. With the same image, Coleridge describes,

> the full development and expansion of the mercantile and commercial order, which in the earlier epochs of the constitution, only existed . . . potentially and in the bud.’ (*Constitution*, 51)

Part Three. The Coleridgean Imagination: its Role in Thought and its Relation to Reason.

Part Three begins by examining Coleridge's distinction (different from Kant's) between reason and understanding, as a context for the development of his theory of imagination, which for Coleridge operates between the two. The initial focus will be on the discussion of the Kantian 'necessary imagination' (Strawson, 2008), and will argue that contrary to such commentators as Richards (1960) and Scruton (1983), Coleridge's primary imagination is not Kant's necessary imagination redescribed. Part Three will also argue that in Coleridge's later works (e.g. *Reflection* [1825], and *Constitution* [1826]), the Ideas of reason do not occlude the place of the imagination.[78] Rather, Coleridge's position on the Ideas could only develop after first establishing the imagination's important role. After these preparatory arguments have been established, Part Three will argue that, for Coleridge, the Ideas are the ultimate objects of contemplation and are accessible to mind through imaginatively created symbols.

3.1 Coleridge's Theory of Poetry: the argument against thoroughgoing Empiricism

Coleridge's theory of imagination is an organic part of his systematic philosophy. The locus classicus for Coleridge's treatment of imagination is *Biographia Literaria* (1815, 1817). Raimonda Modiano's judges that:

> *Biographia Literaria* is without question Coleridge's most controversial, most widely read and provocative work. Since its publication in 1817, the book has attracted polarized critical reactions, from extravagant praise to . . . mean-spirited ridicule, from awe to . . . contempt. While some have perceived the *Biographia* as 'the greatest book of criticism in English' (Arthur Symons) and its author as the 'acknowledged "father" of theory itself' (Trott 1998: 69), . . . F. R. Leavis . . . declared Coleridge's 'currency as an academic classic' to be 'something of a scandal'. (Ed. Burwick, 2009, 204-5)

A crucial philosophical claim made in *Biographia* is that poetry's very possibility proves Empiricism incomplete, and so for Coleridge it retains value only in capitulation to a broader system in which the imagination approaches Ideas and then conveys them aesthetically. Imagination is needed for awareness of reason in its positive aspect. Positive reason consists in Ideas, whereas negative reason is the Law of Contradiction working in the conceptual understanding (see below, pages 161-3). In 1818, Coleridge remarks that:

[78] As suggested by, among others, Boulger (1961, 106-7); Whale (2000, 167); and Vigus (2005 86-7).

> Contemplation is what I call Positive Reason, Reason in her own Sphere, as distinguished from Negative or merely *formal* Reason. Reason in the sphere of the Understanding. (*Marginalia* V, 797)

Negative reason, occurring in the understanding, is essentially clear, differentiating and distinguishing between logical objects and kinds. It is not wholly transparent, as its functioning depends upon medial images. It can be a civilizing force, creating complex systems of order and classification. However, its analytic focus on division emphasizes the very separateness Romanticism seeks to overcome, and it must therefore be balanced by a synthesizing approach to a good beyond selfish concern with lower pleasures and wants.

Finding Locke's and Hartley's theories incapable of understanding poetic development, Coleridge's enthusiasm for British Empiricism wanes, and he begins to develop his own theory of imagination. His argument that Empiricism and Utilitarianism can explain neither how poetry is possible nor how good poetry can be distinguished from bad persuades Mill to make his important distinction between higher and lower pleasures.[79] Since his Christ's Hospital schooldays, Coleridge held a conviction, instilled by headmaster James Boyer:

> that poetry, even that of the loftiest, and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own, as severe as that of science; and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more, and more fugitive causes. In the truly great poets, he would say, there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word. (*Biographia* I, 9)

Much of Coleridge's work pursues this logic of poetry, leading to the conviction that:

> not the poem which we have *read*, but that to which we *return* with the greatest pleasure, possesses the genuine power and claims the name of essential poetry. . . . it would be scarcely more difficult to push a stone out from the pyramids with the bare hand, than to alter a word, or the position of a word, in Milton or Shakespeare, (in their most important works at least) without making the author say something else, or something worse, than he does say. (*Biographia* I, 23)

Initially, Coleridge believed association to link body and mind, explaining how experience multiplies connections, naturally producing similes and metaphors. While associationism was just one aspect of Locke's Empiricism, Hartley based his entire

[79] I do not think Mill goes far enough, however, in explicating his own account, though the attempt is valuable. As he says, it is better to be a Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied ([1863, 1871] 2003, 188), yet, we can ask Mill, who could admit to a positive pleasure, ordinarily conceived, in being dissatisfied? What accords better, I suggest, with his term higher pleasure is an intellectual constancy to an ideal object, to draw on the title of a Coleridge poem, which can be a painful joy, a love, and a yearning, but cannot be a positively hedonic state.

system on association by contiguity and repetition. Although Hartley's influence on Coleridge would not retain its central position, it was, in 1796, strong enough for the poet to name his first son after him.

Coleridge was enthusiastic about Hartley's sublimation theory, whereby sense material is spiritualized, and material objects become aestheticized:

> Some degree of spirituality is the necessary consequence of passing through life. The sensible pleasures and pains must be transferred by association . . . upon things that afford neither sensible pleasure nor sensible pain in themselves, and so beget the intellectual pleasures and pains. ([1749] 1834, 52)

In 'Religious Musings' (1794-6), a 420-line blank verse poem, and his first critically acclaimed work, Coleridge hails Hartley as 'of mortal kind / Wisest', because he essayed to establish moral and spiritual value on a scientific materialist footing, and was the 'first who marked the ideal tribes / Up the fine fibres through the sentient brain' (*Poetical Works* I.1, 61).

By 1819, Coleridge criticizes associationism forcefully,[80] for its necessitarian implications, and for asserting 'That sensation and thought are precisely the same' (*Phil. Lects* II, 523). Nonetheless, he salvages elements of the theory. Associationism retains a humbled but necessary place in his system, with reason and sense at opposite poles, and a redeemed associationism subordinated to the sense end of the pole. Association remains at the mechanistic level and genuine thought emerges only through mental exertion beyond associative force. His proposed levels of thought and pre-thought progress from nature, through sensation; fancy; lower, then higher understanding; imagination; and then reason, through which ultimate truth (divine *logos*) is reached.

Maintaining his anti-reductionist stance, Coleridge criticizes associationism, as noted above, while retaining it in his system. Whereas association drives Hartley's entire psychology, for Coleridge it operates only at the level of the fancy, which processes the sense materials for the lower understanding. Thus fancy provides the lower understanding with counters garnered from sense experience to be worked into concepts, similarly to Plato's objects of *pistis* (belief) developing into the *mathematika*, the concepts of *dianoia.*

Fancy operates with ready-made counters, which are proto-concepts taken from 'Memory emancipated from the order of time and space' (*Biographia* I, 304). These

[80] As he also does when writing *Biographia*, from 1815-17.

counters function like elements in a rebus and give an elementary structure to desire-led thought. In fact Coleridgean fancy shares three features with what Freud was to call primary process thinking in that (1) it operates with rebus-like signifiers; (2) is propelled by the energy of desire or instinct, and (3) its connections are made independently of voluntary guidance via a process analogous to a mechanical or hydraulic model.

The understanding refines fancy's imagistic thought process and abstracts from sense and fancy concepts proper, surpassing fancy's rebus-like signifiers by creating tools for subtle and skilful discourse. Understanding refines thought by giving it logical consistency. Unlike fancy, the understanding obeys the Law of Contradiction, and this is how it can regulate its conceptual schemes into a high degree of internal consistency. The understanding can then organize and articulate its conceptual world while remaining faithful to its sense intuitions, and thus it creates both logically and empirically consistent world-views. This process of creating conceptual worlds is initiated by desires, and is first activated by fancy's proto-conceptual images, which Coleridge calls fixities. Through these fixities, thought first gains its concept of *outness*, as Coleridge terms, after Berkeley, the sense of externality.[81] Thus the understanding is:

> The faculty by which we generalize and arrange the phenomena of perception (*Friend* I, 156)

Understanding outness, including that in our own thoughts and conceptions, we increase self-consciousness, but we also thereby conceive ourselves as detached individuals. Coleridge's greatest philosophical achievement was his sustained commitment to showing that although understanding is necessary to human thought, it should not be mistaken for the mind's highest mode. The understanding's distinctions and divisions lead to the alienation that Romanticism opposes, and this alienation would be final were associationism the ultimate word in human psychology.[82]

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[81] Outness is Berkeley's coinage (1709, 51): 'the *Ideas* of Space, Outness, and things placed at a distance are not strictly speaking, the Object of Sight'. Cf. 149, and 184. Cf. *Notebooks* 1, 1387: 'Language & all symbols give outness to Thoughts / & this the philosophical essence & purpose of Language'. Also, *Notebooks* 3, 3325: 'All minds must think by some symbols . . . which something that is *without*, that has the property of *Outness* (a word which Berkeley preferred to "Externality")'.

[82] Wordworth's *The Tables Turned*, ll. 25-8, formulates the Romantic suspicion of analysis for its own sake:

> Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
> Our meddling intellect
> Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:—
> We murder to dissect.

The sense of individuality presented by the understanding is a personal unity created negatively and negatively held together, by being divided from all others and all things. This individuality is the subjective remainder after the objective entities in experience have been abstracted. The individual thus conceived observes and acts upon nature only through being cut off from it. The Romantic, post-Rousseauvian gist of this caution is familiar: Within the realm of instinct and pre-reflective experience, the mind is at one with nature; with conceptual understanding comes the divorce. As Abrams (2012, 143) explains,

> To be estranged from the natural world was to Coleridge, as to fellow Romantics . . . to experience as a lived reality what he regarded as the post-Newtonian world-view, 'the intuition' in which, as he wrote in *The Friend*, we 'place nature in antithesis to the mind, as . . . death to life'.

Coleridge explains this alienation of mind from nature very clearly when he contrasts:

> the contemplation of reason . . . which arises when we possess ourselves as one with the whole . . . and . . . when . . . we think of ourselves as separated beings, and place nature in antithesis to mind, as object to subject, thing to thought, death to life. This is abstract knowledge, or the science of the mere understanding. (*Friend* I, 520-1)

Coleridge senses the possibility of a higher reunion with nature whereby the ever-mediating imagination conveys eternal Ideas of reason to the temporal understanding. Returning to Abrams's recent commentary, in this reunion:

> alienation is annulled, and the human individual breaks through the barrier of self to achieve awareness of the one life that he shares with all human beings, and with all nature. (2012, 143)

This reunion, displacing the sense of detachment with a higher order of attachment than pre-reflective experience, is the source of a great hope for Coleridge. This hope is both personal and one to remedy many ills of his time, which he is first to describe as the 'Age of Anxiety' (*Marginalia* IV, 610).[83]

For the French Mechanists and the British Empiricist philosophers, conceptual understanding is the apex of human intellectual ability. Coleridge, by contrast, cautions that taking the understanding to be the summit of human thought would describe only:

> a race of animals, in whom the presence of reason is manifested solely by the absence of instinct. (*Friend* I, 440)

[83] In a marginal note to Scott's *Peveril of the Peak* (1823), Coleridge writes: 'His is an Age of *Anxiety* from the Crown to the Hovel—from the Cradle to the Coffin; all is anxious striving to maintain life, or *appearances*—to *rise*, as the only condition of not falling'.

In this system, negative reason allows the understanding to accrue knowledge through deduction and the universal principle of non-contradiction (see below, pages 161-3). Positive reason, however, develops by contemplating, philosophically or poetically, the perfections of universal standards and values, the Platonic Ideas.

When one reflects on the principle of non-contradiction, the mind is impressed by its universal applicability over both phenomenal and non-phenomenal objects, and a glimmer of positive reason is thereby intuited. Positive reason in the mind is more clearly observed in the use of symbolism, whereby imagination presents the invisible Idea through a symbol, 'a living educt' (*Statesman's Manual*, 28-9)[84] for contemplation that is consubstantial, as Coleridge puts it, with the Idea itself. Hence his definition of an Idea as:

> an educt of the Imagination actuated by the pure Reason, to which there neither is nor can be an adequate correspondent in the world of the senses—this is and this alone = an IDEA. (*Statesman's Manual*, 113-4)

The philosophic imagination, bringing reason to the understanding, is that power of self-intuition whereby one can, as Coleridge writes in 1815:

> interpret and understand . . . the *potential* works *in* them, even as the actual works *on* them. (*Biographia* I, 167)

I take this to mean that philosophic imagination involves the capacity to consider one's thoughts, actions, emotions, and desires in a contemplative context as phenomenal signs of motivation towards the non-phenomenal. Our lives thus evolve and struggle through feeling and thought towards Ideas of love, the virtues, freedom, beauty, and God.

Expanded by philosophic imagination, the enlightened understanding – which is not equivalent to reason, but is enlightened by it – cognizes and reflects upon mental acts. It is thus the faculty of reflection. Being thus reflective, and allowing for thought to think itself, the enlightened understanding marks the transformation of the understanding into a faculty of self-understanding. As such, its development is the beginning of philosophy. The enlightened understanding has what we might call an instinct for truth, in that it can discern the difference between the operation external objects and internal drives on one's mind. Discerning the effects of external and internal stimuli on the mind involves reflection on the actual, and the observed.

The enlightened understanding can also, moreover, apply itself to Ideas, insofar as

[84] He describes Biblical histories as 'living educts of the Imagination' unlike the histories, such as Hume's and Gibbon's, of his age's empirico-mechanistic philosophy.

it strains towards them. In enlightened understanding, one seeks to discern Ideas amid the flow of both wider history and one's social and personal life. Much as enlightened understanding can now recognize and thus gain a degree of self-control over desires and drives, it seeks to know Ideas rather than unconcernedly and inadvertently misconstrue them. Insofar as enlightened understanding can reflect on Ideas, it does so by contemplating them as the potential working within the mind. For Coleridge, this power for psychological self-reflection, or 'sacred power of self-intuition', is 'the highest and intuitive knowledge, as distinguished from the discursive' (*Biographia* I, 241). This potential in the mind consists of intelligible, non-phenomenal values made aesthetically appreciable only through imagination. Imagination, then, fuses, dissolves, and otherwise recreates aesthetic material (perceptions, qualia, moods, social meanings, and so on), and thereby provides the understanding a tangible and enlightening access to Ideas that it otherwise only inchoately grasps.

We approach Ideal value through intellectual interest and affinity and, more sensuously, through aesthetic impulse and a sense of the music and poetry subjectively appreciated in life contemplated in its perfect and objective potential. Noting in Coleridge 'a peculiarly empirical transcendentalism', or what we can call a sensuous-transcendental approach, Wendling (1995, 12; 10) finds that his:

> continued awareness of the transcendental . . . occurs only through the sensible world and exists to improve experience of it. His transcendentalism is at once of this earth and demandingly otherworldly.

The understanding in its negative form can only grasp that on which the actual works. Unenlightened by even a dim sense of Ideas (reason in its positive form), the lower understanding is blind to the working of the potential (the Ideal values) in itself and in phenomenal actuality. The imagination, philosophic or poetic, uses contemplation and symbolism to bring Ideas of reason to the understanding, transforming it into an intellectual understanding 'employed in the service of Reason'. (*Reflection*, 346)

With his theory of imagination and reason aiming at truth, Coleridge advances the general Romantic hope of a human reunion with nature and the source of the principles of the universe, the *Logos* of tradition, which contrast with the abstracted rules and concepts derived by the understanding from the senses. The reunion raising human life towards reason is a higher reunion because, for Coleridge, reason is present *in* nature but only, and not always, present *to* the understanding. This reason is a *Logos* implicit

in nature, and not just a human faculty of discourse.

With the understanding achieving enlightened self-awareness through reason, a new horizon beyond fixed and definite concepts may be envisioned. Coleridge aspires to orient his age to the horizon of Ideas. In 1832, he diagnoses the intellectual malady of his day in observing that,

> The histories and political economy of the present and preceding century partake in the general contagion of its mechanistic philosophy, and are the *product* of an unenlivened generalizing understanding. (*Statesman's Manual*, 28)

Twenty three years earlier, he argues that Empiricism has created 'the Epoch of the Understanding and the Senses' and the 'epoch of division and separation'. (*Friend* I, 447)

We have seen in this interpretation that Coleridge demonstrates Empiricism's failure to account for the possibility of imaginative poetry. He persuasively argues that Empiricism can only account for works of fancy mechanically constructed from associative processes. By contrast, he finds in the imagination a higher, vital power that 'dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to create', while struggling 'to idealize and unify' where fancy, the highest artistic faculty possible in an Empiricist system, can only manipulate 'essentially fixed and dead' images. (*Biographia* I, 304)

Beyond his criticism of Empiricism, he describes an understanding enlightened by Ideas of reason translated by imagination. In contrast with Kant, for whom Ideas are subjective notions that ought not to be hypostatized or treated as independent of the human mind, Ideas always have objective reality for Coleridge, and are thus Platonic Ideas. He does not denigrate the mere understanding (i.e. understanding unenlightened by reason), but rather criticizes views that take this facility with concepts and calculative mental operations to be the supreme end and apex of the human mind.

This lower understanding manipulates only the phenomenal and imagistic products of sense and fancy in favour of the enlightened, or higher, understanding, which is transformed from the merely conceptual understanding. Conceptual understanding develops into an enlightened one through an aesthetic appreciation or a philosophic contemplation that approaches Ideas as objective reality. The approach involves desire and is thus felt as a yearning towards spiritual growth, whereby the mind acknowledges itself to be incipient and incomplete on recognizing both the potential at work within itself, and that potential's source as an eternally true pre-existence. It is to Coleridge's theory of the harmonizing mind that we now turn.

3.2 Coleridge's Order of the Mental Powers: harmonizing the empirical and the transcendent

Coleridge's sustained criticism of reductive mechanism and of the related Empiricism is undoubtedly influential, gaining the admiration of such later nineteenth-century thinkers as Mill, Maurice, Newman, and the Americans, Emerson, Thoreau, and James Marsh. His criticism arguably gains strength in being a syncretic surpassing of its target, proposing in its stead a system incorporating Empiricism, rather than tracelessly replacing it.[85] Referring to his syncretising parts of systems whose ultimate views he opposes as too narrow and atomistic, Coleridge writes,

> Exclude Utility? No. My system of Moral Philosophy neither excludes nor rests on it: were it for this reason only that it includes it. (*Notebooks* 4, 5209)

Mill (1859, 458-9) commends Coleridge's 'catholic and unsectarian' spirit, and agrees that Utilitarianism and Empiricism are syncretized in Coleridge's system, acknowledging it as:

> less extreme in its opposition, it denies less of what is true in the doctrine it wars against (Mill, 1859, 403)

Having explained in detail the distinction between the higher and the lower understanding, we may turn to a fuller sketch of the mental powers that Coleridge describes, annotating (see Appendix A, below) in 1818 his copy of Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie*, to which he extensively though critically refers for his own lectures on the history of Philosophy.[86]

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[85] Newman (1852) relies on Coleridge's notion of Idea as the ethos and essence of something Ideal, or, considered from the human side, something perfectible towards an Ideal standard that perhaps evades complete definition. Newman (1864, titled after a Coleridge poem) also holds that Coleridge lays the 'philosophical basis' for the Church of his age, and 'while he indulged a liberty of speculation . . . installed a higher philosophy into inquiring minds, than they had hitherto been accustomed to accept. In this way he made a trial of his age, and succeeded in interesting its genius in the cause of Catholic truth'.

[86] Coleridge refers to Tennemann's *History* while preparing his philosophical lectures. He coins the term *marginalia* in a letter (1818 or 1819) describing his reading notes. A published use of the word by him occurs in *Constitution* ([1830] 1976), 166. Other interesting Coleridgeisms, perhaps especially impressive for philosophers, include: actualize, adaptive, after-effect, anthropic, artefact, associative, astoundment, atomistic, bi-polar, cyclical, darwinize, desynonymize, epoch-forming, existentially, experiential, factual, fatalistic, generic term, greenery, heuristic, historicism, intensify, interpenetration, negativity, neuro-pathology, humanism, otherworldliness, pessimism, phenomenal, post-prandial, precondition, preconfigure, productivity, protozoa, psycho-analytical, psychologize, psycho-somatic, realism, refuel, relativity, romanticize, selfless, self-realization, self-torture, sense of reality, sentience, soulmate, statuesque, subconsciousness, subjectivity, technique, telegraph-pole, and totalize, to show but a small sample of his lexical contributions to the English language. For a list of 700 words coined by Coleridge, see McKusick (1992), which, refering to the OED first edition, 1884-1928 cites Coleridge for 3,569 words (many of which he coins).

Here we may see at once the germ of Coleridge's proposed system. This sketch outlines his philosophical scheme of the mental powers, or epistemological modes, and modifies Plato's, as I argued in detail in Part One. The sketch allows an important comparison with Plato's Divided Line schema (*Republic*, Book VI), a comparison that has been neither made nor suggested until the present study. In the marginal note, Coleridge writes that,

> The simplest yet practically sufficient order of the Mental Powers is, beginning from the
>
> | lowest | highest |
> |---|---|
> | Sense | Reason |
> | Fancy | Fancy |
> | Understanding | Understanding |
> | Understanding | Understanding |
> | Imagination | Fancy |
> | Reason | Sense |
>
> Fancy and imagination are oscillations, *this* connecting R.[eason] and U[nderstanding]; *that* connecting Sense and Understanding. (*Marginalia* V, 798, and Appendix A, below)

The polarity is clear: The lowest order, sense, progresses to the highest order, reason. They are counterparts, as are fancy and imagination. The lower and higher understandings are also counterparts. Barfield (1971, 2006) notes, in a memorable image, that these complementarities are like octaves. There is more in common, or in tune, between reason and sense than between reason and understanding, even though understanding is closer to reason along the pole. Thus Coleridge says that:

> reason is an organ bearing the same relation to spiritual objects, the Universal, the Eternal, and the Necessary, as the eye bears to material and contingent phaenomena. (*Friend* I, 155)

This position, which I find to be a kind of rationalist intuitionism, acknowledges that sense and reason operate at opposite epistemological poles. It thus accords with Plato's Divided Line. However, by bringing out the harmony between sense and reason, Coleridge simultaneously demonstrates their essential similarity. A precursor to this position of rationalist intuitionism is found in the Cambridge Platonism of John Smith (1660, 16), who argues that:

> *Reason* . . . is turn'd into *Sense* [when]: That which before was only *Faith* well built upon sure Principles (for such our *science* may be) now becomes *Vision*.

The spiritual realism of Coleridge is more systematic than that developing in Cambridge Platonism (which should not surprise, as Coleridge's system is more evolved, and gains

support from the German transcendental idealism). Moreover, Coleridge qualifies his rationalist intuitionism by noting an asymmetry in the otherwise harmonic ends of the mental pole. The organs of sense, with their mental counterpart *aisthesis*, are very different from their objects, and hence necessarily convert their objects into their own kind, that is, by receiving them as physical stimuli to be converted into qualia.

From the foregoing, we can deduce the Galilean[87] philosophy of Locke (*Essay*, II.8), with its attention to primary qualities (solidity, figure, motion, extension, number, and situation) in the object; secondary qualities, also in the object, which are powers to affect the perceiving subject with ideas, i.e. qualia, via the sense organs; and tertiary qualities, or powers to effect change in another object's primary qualities (secondary qualities are therefore just a species of tertiary qualities, in that the things effected are not any objects whatever, but neurons in the peripheral and central nervous systems.

As noted above, Coleridge complains that the Empiricists of his day conceive the conceptual understanding as the apex of human thought and development. Yet at this point he draws a bar, just before the higher understanding. The high point of the Empiricist scheme is only the mid-point of the Coleridgean. In *Biographia*, he explicitly employs a geographical analogy to represent the empirical-transcendental boundary:

> As the elder Romans distinguished their northern provinces into Cis-Alpine and Trans-Alpine, so may we divide all the objects of human knowledge into those on this side, and those on the other side of spontaneous consciousness. (*Friend*, I, 236)

Elsewhere, Coleridge remarked that the genius of Aristotle's conceptual understanding was a cloud preventing his being able to see what Plato indicated in his theory of transcendent Ideas:

> Aristotle was, and still is, the sovereign lord of the understanding—the faculty judging by the senses. He was a conceptualist, and never could raise himself into that higher state, which was natural to Plato, and has been so to others, in which the understanding is distinctly contemplated, and, as it were, looked down upon from the throne of actual ideas, or living, inborn, essential truths. (*Table Talk*, 2 July, 1830)

This cloud is like the bar between Coleridge's lower and higher understanding, marking the limit of empirical concepts. The higher understanding has been enlightened by the

[87] *The Assayer*, [1623] (1957, 274): 'I think that tastes, odours, colours, and so on, are no more than mere names so far as the object in which we locate them are concerned, and that they reside in consciousness. Hence if the living creature were removed, all these qualities would be wiped away and annihilated.' Galileo, however, is no Empiricist, as he is firmly committed to the overarching epistemological importance of experiment-independent Mathematics. Galileo's view of subjective qualities already exists in Democritus: 'By convention there are sweet and bitter, hot and cold, by convention colour, but in reality atoms and the void', Fragment 9, cited by Sextus Empiricus, in *Adversus Mathematicos* II [Against Professors], Bk VII, §135.

Ideas of reason, which are reason in its positive sense. The lower understanding is unenlightened, and reason only in the negative sense of being able to employ the universal Law of Contradiction in forming and applying distinctions, itself an analytic (Plato's method of division), negative procedure compared to the synthesizing powers of what Plato calls the method of collection, which is part of, for Coleridge, positive reason and its positive entities, the Ideas. The lines, then, that Coleridge draws in his note to a copy of Tennemann's *Geschichte*, are thus the bars between reason's transcendent Ideas (for Kant these are transcendental) and sense's intuitions. These bars divide the understanding into higher and lower types. The octave-like harmony of corresponding points between the poles implies a simile: as sense intuits its stimuli, reason opens to Ideas.

Hold your forefingers apart, and let one be reason, the other sense. Bring them a little closer, letting imagination and fancy occupy the next upper and lower positions, with imagination one down from reason, the apex, and fancy one up from sense, at the opposite pole in the mental system. Remember that this is a polarity, and not, strictly speaking, a hierarchy, so that faculty are not simply opposed, but also joined in harmony. Thus, as we shall see, sense has a strong affinity with reason in being its polar counterpart. An important thesis in the present dissertation is that we can understand the contemplated objects and principles of ultimate truth as the post-thought counterparts to the sensations and fluid associations of pre-thought mentality on the opposite end of the polarity. Moving the forefingers in one more time, we have the higher understanding and the lower understanding.

In Coleridge's system, these higher and lower faculties of understanding straddle the polar midline. Although his system risks being mistaken for a homuncular faculty psychology, Coleridge does not assume discrete faculties, but rather describes different kinds of mental processing. Pradhan (1999, 11) summarizes the judgment of several philosophers in saying that Coleridge's:

> analysis of the 'strengths and measures of the human mind' is not a traditional 'faculty psychology' but . . . a transcendental analysis of the conditions which make experience possible.

Thus for Coleridge, genuine creativity unifies the faculties, combining mental exertion with receptive appreciation. Thus he writes,

> The poet, described in *ideal* perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other . . . He diffuses a tone, and spirit of unity,

> that blends and . . . *fuses*, each into each by that synthetic . . . power . . . imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding,[88] and retained under their irremissive though gentle and unnoticed controul . . . reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of diverse powers (*Biographia* II, 15-7)

A year or so later, Coleridge develops this notion, describing spirit (often contrasted by German authors with soul, *Seele*) as the free and intellectually unified exercise of the mental powers:

> What is precisely meant by Geist? Does it mean anything more than the whole man in the free and combined use of all his faculties, even as he uses his senses? (*Marginalia* V, 801)

Each process along the Coleridgean intellectual polarity, be it flight of fancy or confident deduction of reason, involves the whole in an organicism that opposes Empiricist or Mechanistic reduction. Even though individual minds are not equally aware of reason's presence in every human act, reason is, nevertheless, always present, though often somnambulant. Coleridge clarifies:

> Every man must feel, that though he may not be exerting different faculties, he is exerting his faculties in a different way, when in one instance he begins with some one self-evident truth, (that the radii of a circle, for instance, are all equal,) and . . . sees at once, without any actual experience, that some other thing must be true likewise . . . and so on till he comes . . . to the properties of a lever, considered as the spoke of a circle . . . [now empirically demonstrable to anybody] who had never seen a lever . . . but this one, that there is a conceivable figure, all possible lines from the middle to the circumference of which are of the same length (*Friend* I, 158)

This theoretical demonstration preponderates in reason, and the attentive understanding strains to conceive the truths presented, aided sometimes by fancy-supplied images. Next, Coleridge compares this clarity achieved by mental exertion with practical, but epistemically less secure, experientially derived rules-of-thumb:

> as, for instance, whether it would be better to plant a particular spot of ground with larch, or with Scotch fir, or with oak in preference to either. Surely every man will acknowledge, that his mind was very differently employed in the first case from what it was in the second; and all men have agreed . . . the first class . . . [are] truths . . . impossible to conceive otherwise: while the results of the second class are called *facts*, or things of *experience* (*Friend* I, 158)

Demonstrating the preponderance of reason in the former species of thinking, and of understanding in the latter, Coleridge understands his Hume.[89] Still, he interprets the significance of distinguishing reason and logical principle differently from contingent

[88] Here we know he describes secondary imagination, because the secondary is under greater voluntary control.
[89] I.e. Hume's fork (*Enquiry*, IV.i), which distinguishes relations of ideas from matters of fact, consigning all else to the flames.

fact and experience. Here, Coleridge demonstrates his understanding of Kant, to whom he is grateful for framing the *Verstehen* (Understanding) / *Vernunft* (Reason) distinction. However, this distinction already exists, with differently interpreted significance, in Plato's progression from *dianoia* to *noesis*.

As with Plato, the reason / understanding distinction for Coleridge is not what Kant makes it to be. For Coleridge and Plato, but not for Kant, reason is approached and intuited (though not sensibly) or contemplated, and then rendered to the understanding. Such rendering occurs, for example, when a physics or mathematics teacher demonstrates the geometrical properties of a circle by using a lever. When the pupil begins to understand the lesson, reason is acknowledged as the principle of the understanding itself. Individuals who are not awake to the presence of reason are therefore likely to lack confidence in its universality, and errors of judgement, and timing, abound. Nevertheless, and under the same account, even the least awakened individual is not barred from intuiting the true, good, and beautiful in intimations and presentiments of reason present in perception and aesthetic expression.

Because Coleridge's mental system is a polar model, a fitting analogy is the bar magnet, no area of which is separate from another. Should the magnet be cut, we would have two bar magnets, and not separate north and south poles. Distancing his system from faculty psychology, he comments,

> When I make a . . . distinction in human nature, I am fully aware that it is a distinction, not a division, and that . . . every act of mind . . . unites the properties of Sense, Understanding, and Reason. Nevertheless, it is of great practical importance, that these distinctions be made and understood. (*Friend* II, 104)

3.3 Primary Imagination Distinguished from Kant's Necessary Imagination

Coleridge does not disparage the fancy and the understanding, although he cautions that they should not be overestimated by being mistaken for imagination and reason. Just as genius requires talent as its counterpart, reason and imagination depend on fancy and understanding, with the higher faculties using the materials of the lower. To reiterate, fancy was for Coleridge the offspring of association, providing 'fixities and definites' (*Biographia* I, 233) from experience that could be transformed into concepts. He cautioned that the transition from fancy to understanding has a higher counterpart in imagination's movement toward reason.

Coleridge's fancy is the dynamism that formed early mythologies. This dynamism suggested, beyond antique memory, 'Beings invisible', emancipating the mind from 'the grosser thrall of the present impulse', as he expresses it in his poem 'The Destiny of Nations: A Vision' (*Poetical Works* I.1, 279-299).[90] Coleridge imagines how the dark mind of old was first unsensualized by fancy:

> . . . For Fancy is the power
> That first unsensualises the dark mind,
> Giving it new delights; and bids it swell
> With wild activity; and peopling air,
> By obscure fears of Beings invisible,
> Emancipates it from the grosser thrall
> Of the present impulse, teaching Self-control,
> Till Superstition with unconscious hand
> Seat Reason on her throne. Wherefore not vain,
> Nor yet without permitted power impressed,
> I deem those legends terrible, with which
> The polar ancient thrills his uncouth throng (ll. 80-91)

In Coleridge's system, fancy develops not only culture and myth, but also helps generate self-consciousness. However, commentators who hastily and narrowly interpret Coleridgean imagination as good and fancy as bad overlook such details. For instance, Richards, Engell and Bate (introducing their Bollingen Series edition of the *Biographia*), and others fail to stress that, for Coleridge, fancy converts perceptions into memories, streaming these together in spatio-temporal associations, thus generating consciousness. Scruton (1983, 127-136) also interprets fancy as entirely detrimental, but here he is developing his own view, and not aiming to provide a scholarly reading of Coleridge. Fancy, for Coleridge, is only to be denigrated when debased into its passive form, which leads to 'the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude [by which] we have

[90] Composed 1795, contributing to Robert Southey's epic, 'Joan of Arc'. Revised 1796-7, and 1815, standing for itself in *Sibylline Leaves*.

eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not' (*Biographia* II, 7). Passive fancy falsely reduces all possibilities to what can be concretely pictured, and the philosophical Empiricism that is based on the associationist model of mind that reduces all cognition to what Coleridge calls passive fancy is therefore an early form of eliminative reductionism.

In my interpretation, fancy converts sense materials into memories, and the primary imagination shapes the significance of perceptions by evaluating what is sensed according to the Ideas of reason. Insofar as primary imagination synthesizes sense materials with the concepts of the understanding, it seems analogous to Kant's faculty 'concealed in the depths of the human soul' responsible for transcendental schematism (*CPR,* B180-1). While Kantian imagination synthesizes conceptual thought and sensible content into a categorially organized world of perception, the Coleridgean imagination infuses and illuminates this world with the moral and aesthetic values conferred by the Ideas of reason. Coleridge's account of imagination should be contrasted with that of Kant.

The epigraph to Strawson's (2008) essay on 'Imagination and Perception' is from Kant:

> Psychologists have hitherto failed to realize that imagination is a necessary ingredient of perception itself. (*CPR,* A120)

Strawson takes this notion of 'necessary imagination'[91] to mean that recognizing any object as falling under an empirical concept is a consequence of this faculty. For example, 'my recognizing the strange dog I see as a dog at all owes something to the imagination' (Strawson, 2008, 52). He notes that using the term 'imagination' to denote an influence over the processes of perception is not common. More often than not imagination is linked with pure invention, false beliefs, or misconceptions. For Kant, however, imagination provides the bridge between intuitions and concepts, making intelligible experience possible with its transcendental schematism.

Crucially, Kant's imagination is a bridge between intuition and concept, providing rules for applying concepts to the manifold. Thus the 'great buzzing, blooming confusion', as James ([1890] 2007, 488) would later describe the infant's experience, can become intelligible experience, or understanding. In Strawson's gloss of the transcendental schematism of the imagination's main consequence, 'The thought is echoed in the sight, the concept is alive in the perception' (2008, 64). Kant's

[91] Coleridge's phrase (*Friend* I, 440n.), although I do not suppose that Strawson alludes to *The Friend*.

imagination is necessary, then, because it makes intelligible experience possible. But why did he call this transcendental schematizing faculty *imagination*?

Firstly, Kant calls it imagination because the faculty produces a schema (a kind of transcendental template for experience) that combines a concept with what we may call a portmanteau image derived from generalized intuitions. Much subconscious work is required to get even thus far; hence Kant calls this faculty:

> an art [*Kunst*] concealed in the depths of the human soul whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover. (*CPR*, A142, B181)

The schema then works as a rule, and necessarily with other rules, to generate experience from the synthesis of concepts of the understanding and the manifold of sense intuitions. To extricate images representing objects from the manifold of sense intuition, pure concepts (a priori categories of the understanding such as being, non-being, cause and effect, duration, substance, and so forth) must dissolve the buzzing, blooming confusion and conceptualize it into enduring, substantial individuals and the process that they undergo.

Coleridge, however, struggles with Kant's proposing this obscure extrication of objects and processes from the manifold, arguing that if a tree, say, can be extracted from the manifold of sense prior to acquiring the empirical concept of tree, then is there not a preposterous circularity to Kant's theory? Annotating his copy of *CPR*, Coleridge describes his 'Doubts' and 'Struggles' with Kant's account of how the manifold of sense becomes intelligible, concept-soaked experience.[92] Coleridge asks,

> How can that be called *ein mannigfaltiges ὕλη* [*hyle*] which yet contains in itself the ground why I apply one category to it rather than another? one mathematical form and not another? (*Marginalia* III, 247-8)

He recognizes a serious problem in Kant's account:

> What do you mean by a *fact*, an empiric Reality, which alone can give solidity (*Inhalt* [content]) to our Conceptions?—It seems from many passages, that this indispensible Test is itself previously manufactured by this very conceptive Power, and that the whole not of our making is the mere sensation of a mere Manifold—in short, mere influx of motion, to use a physical metaphor.—I apply the Categoric forms to a Tree—well! but first *what* is this tree? How do I come by this Tree? (*Marginalia* III, 248-9)

Kant's fact that gives content to conceptions, allowing us to keep track of our empirically oriented thoughts in a way that, he says, we cannot keep track of Ideas of reason, is itself previously manufactured by the conceptive power. Coleridge suggests

[92] Strawson's metaphor.

that what Kant calls the manifold already contains the distinctions that Kant would have the understanding provide through the schemata. The tree within the manifold has already been interpreted as a something that then rightly takes the mantle of the concept 'tree'.

Secondly, Kant calls his mediating, synthesizing faculty that produces the transcendental schematism *imagination* because something corresponding to the schema is then seen in the manifold. With this seeing-in we may now find in Kant's usage a widespread, conventional sense of imagination. The power of transcendental schemata to project conceptual meaning onto sense impressions accounts for the phenomenological force of mistaken seeing-in, or aspectual perception, such as when one trips over a beam of light that is really a pine plank, or Coleridge's keenly observed and subtly reflective phenomenological example of seeing two circling Kites (*Accipiters*) become, on noticing an inconsistency with past experience, the leaves on a branch that they really were.

> I saw . . . a pair of Kites—floating about—I looked at them for some seconds when it occurred to me that I had never before seen two Kites together—instantly the vision disappeared—it was neither more nor less than two pairs of Leaves, each pair on a separate Stalk, on a young Fruit tree that grew on the other side of the wall, not two yards from my eye. The leaves being alternate did, when I looked at them as leaves, strikingly resemble wings—& they were the only leaves on the Tree. —The magnitude was given by the imagined Distance; that Distance by the former Adjustment of the Eye, which *remained* in consequence of the deep impression, length of time, I had been looking at the Kite (*Notebooks* I, 1668)

Experiences such as mistaking a beam of light for a plank of wood, or pairs of leaves for Kites conform to Kant's model of perception, whereby conceptual suppositions structure how sensations become interpreted. Coleridge nevertheless opposes Kant whenever he suggests that sense material must be already meaningful (as we examined in detail in Part One, which compares Coleridge's Sense with Plato's *eikasia* and *aesthesis*). Thus, for example, he struggles (in the aforementioned 1801 Notebook entry) with Kant's conceiving that transcendental schemata penetrate the manifold to reveal discrete elements (such as 'this tree').

If the data within the manifold that allowed the recognition of a tree were already isolated as (a) meaningfully coherent, and (b) distinct from its surrounding data (if, that is, the *something to be seen as a tree* could already be distinguished as an *it* in the first place), then the information in the manifold would already be meaningful, and experience would already exist, making the transcendental schematism redundant.

Coleridge, in my interpretation, implies this line of argument, but does not, in his extant writings, pursue the argument to its conclusion.

In Coleridge's polar scheme of the faculties, sense is somnambulant reason, and reason has the intuitiveness of sense in its ideal pole. Both are nearer to each other, as 'octaves' in the polar field, than they are to understanding. The meaning found in sense perception is not a conceptual impress of the understanding; the manifold of sense already contains its articulations. Objects and events already stand out from one another in sensual, perceptual experience, although they do so in entire or perfect separation, as they do in the conceptual clarity of the understanding. Conceptual understanding focuses on this manifold only when something is reconsidered, or is taken as problematic, as in Heidegger's ([1927] 1996, 69-70) notion of the hammer taken as a collection of present-at-hand qualities only when it is broken or needs adjustment.

It is therefore mistaken to interpret, as Richards (1960, 58) does, Coleridge's primary imagination as responsible for:

> the world of motor buses, beefsteaks, and acquaintances

Richards implies that the primary imagination has nothing poetic about it, and is a faculty generating, or at least organizing, perception, much as Kant proposes. I argue that Richards is mistaken here. For him, the faculty is to be interpreted as merely the:

> normal perception that produces the usual world of the senses . . . the framework of things and events within which we maintain our every day existence, the world of the routine satisfaction of our minimum exigencies. (Richards, 1960, 58)

The secondary imagination was proposed as the same power as the primary, but superior and subject to more voluntary control, thus creating poetry and other artworks. This sameness in kind but superiority in degree of the secondary to the primary imagination implies that, for Coleridge, whatever the primary imagination does, the secondary imagination does too, but better and more consciously. However, the voluntary, reflective, shaping power of the secondary imagination is in no way merely a heightened facility in creating rules for applying concepts, and here I argue against Richards and Engell. The position asserted by Richards and by Engell (see 3, below), and by those who agree with them, contradicts the essential facts (1 and 2, below).

1. Coleridge says that a rule-governed process applying concepts to sense material is insufficient for producing poetry.
2. Kant's transcendental schematism of the imagination is a rule-governed process

applying concepts to sense material.

3. Richards and Engell say that Coleridge's primary imagination is Kant's transcendental schematism of the imagination.

Had Coleridge conceived the primary imagination to be a schematizing faculty (modelled after the Kantian imagination that unites image and concept into rules for synthesizing experience), then the secondary imagination would merely be a superior degree of schematism under greater voluntary control. Commentators who read the primary imagination as Coleridge translating Kant's transcendental synthesis will, however, find they cannot account for this discrepancy.[93] An even stranger reading, or rather misreading, underlies Worthen's (2010, 104) statement that the secondary imagination is 'largely unconscious'. Worthen apparently forgets Coleridge's crucial definition of secondary imagination as 'voluntary' and 'co-existing with the conscious will' (*Biographia* I, 304).

I suggest that misreadings of Coleridge's primary and secondary orders of imagination often derive from the confusion sown – but felt as clarity because not thoroughly checked against Coleridge himself – by Richards, Engell, or the influence of both. A lesson to be learned from the fact that divergent and contradictory readings of Coleridge's orders of imagination exist is that the descriptors *primary* and *secondary* are themselves insufficient. Coleridge might have avoided some simple misreadings had he used a parenthetic qualifying classification, such as: primary (original / universal) imagination, and secondary (voluntary / artwork-producing) imagination. My suggestions here are not meant to be final, and are open to refinement.

In a less elevated degree (and under less voluntary control) than the secondary imagination, the primary imagination relates the order of Ideal value to perceived actuality, thus augmenting perception with an evaluative dimension. Primary imagination, I suggest, poetizes objects, events, projects, and histories within ordinary life, creating vibrancy, beauty, moods, and adding moral and aesthetic qualities. Gregory (2003, 64) describes the primary imagination very well as 'perception precisely as irradiated by reason'. [94] This irradiation non-conceptually and vitally confers

[93] For another example among many, see Engell (1981, Ch. 21). To reiterate, Richards holds this view of the primary imagination as Coleridge's translation of Kant's transcendental schematism of the imagination.

[94] This alludes to Coleridge's image of reason by irradiated (*Statesman's Manual*, 18-19), derived from Plotinus's interpretation of Plato.

significant value, enacting the:

> repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM (*Biographia* I, 304)

This creative act is not conceptual and schematic, as Richards and Engell presume in holding Coleridge elaborately to follow Kant, and the primary imagination does not, therefore, merely stamp concepts into a manifold in a Kantian synthesis of experience.

Here again, my reading of Coleridge's primary and secondary degrees of imagination clearly opposes that of Richards. Richards holds the value-discerning work of creative discovery to be the secondary imagination's accomplishment. His position, which I find to be a misreading, holds that:

> The secondary imagination, reforming this world, gives us not only poetry – in the limited sense in which literary critics concern themselves with it – but every aspect of the routine world in which it is invested with other values than these necessary for our bare continuance as living beings; all objects for which we can feel love, awe, admiration, every quality beyond the account of physics, chemistry and the physiology of sense-perception, nutrition, reproduction and locomotion; every awareness for which a civilized life is preferred by us to an uncivilized. (Richards, 1960, 59)

I, on the other hand (and I argue I stand with Coleridge here), understand the *poiesis* of usually non-verbal creative discovery to be a universal human facility. The primary imagination I therefore take to be the poetizer of everyday experience whereby, as Coleridge says, 'all men are poets in their way' (*Letters* II, 768).

If Richards' interpretation were right, then only those rare individuals with an especially high degree of more voluntarily controlled imagination would experience 'love, awe, admiration, and every quality beyond that of physics', etc., unless Richards wished to contradict Coleridge's statement that the secondary imagination is the same power as the primary but superior and under a greater voluntary control. Indeed, Coleridge says the secondary imagination is:

> identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and the mode of its operation. (*Biographia Literaria* I, 304)

In denuding the Coleridgean primary imagination of its perceptual poetry, Richards mutates Coleridge's anti-reductive, organic, vital view into a foreshadowing of the debate that would later involve Richards between Snow's (1960) 'two cultures' diagnosis of modern society and academia and the acute though intemperate response it provoked from Richards' former graduate student, Leavis (1962). In misconceiving primary imagination, Richards also fails to consider Coleridge's genuine interest in the

profounder reaches of physics, chemistry (note his enthusiasm for his friend Humphry Davy's work), and his own 'Theory of Life'.

The passage from Richards concludes that:

> the secondary imagination . . . gives us . . . every awareness for which a civilized life is preferred by us to an uncivilized (Richards, 1960, 59)

Apparently, Richards forgets Coleridge's crucial distinction between cultivation and civilization, whereby Coleridge argues at length for the superiority of the call to permanence provided by cultivation over the civilizing drive for progression. Coleridge argues for the value of both, but that cultivation is the profounder, as its activity both is and promotes an end in itself, whereas civilization is always a means. Richards' position would have benefited from careful consideration of these passages in *The Statesman's Manual*, rather than interpreting Coleridge into Richards' own position.

Primary imagination's unwritten poetry of ordinary life, as I propose it, is not the transcendental schematism ordering the manifold of sense, and the theory of primary imagination that I outline here is not one of merely historical or literary concern with what Coleridge meant, but is rather a philosophical concern with the truth that he pursued. I take primary imagination to be foremost what Coleridge says imagination is, a shaping power,[95] and in that I agree with Barth's (2003, 1) general interpretation that it is:

> the faculty that allows the human person, whether instinctively or consciously, to shape the world into meaning

With the primary imagination as I interpret it, ontology emerges: here kinds of being are revealed. From a background of *is*s, *ought*s emerge. Objectives arise interpretatively as having-to-be-done, and are thus infused with value. Other people are observed not merely as contingent entities, but as relating to moral and aesthetic values insofar as any aims and ideals are ascribed to them. Persons are understood as souls rather than as mere things, and their valued possessions, for example, and when recognized as possessions, stand out from their surroundings, so that we impulsively apologize when we mistakenly fail to respect their property.

In the theory of primary imagination that I propose, living beings are encountered as ontologically different from non-living entities. Actions and objects stand out as good or bad, beautiful or hideous, right or wrong, with tremendously powerful effect.

[95] 'Dejection', 1802: 'shaping spirit of imagination'.

This incipient ontology, or acquaintance with kinds of being, is the creative recognition in experience of different orders of essence and existence. This ontology we feel long before we can articulate. Some articulations are profoundly and generally resonant, and these are works of religious, ethico-legal, and artistic expression that shape entire cultures over millennia.

The emergence of this variously populated ontological landscape requires imagination to apply not only concepts but also Ideas to experience. The experience of beauty, of the sublime, of the moral aspects of order and mess, of the soothing qualities of dripping water and leaves falling, all arise from the poetic ontology of ordinary life, and they need primarily to be imagined to exist for us at all. Acts of imagination are not, however, utter inventions, but consist in creatively recognizing Ideal and potential values in the surrounding world.

My analysis of Coleridge's view of the primary imagination accounts for its capacity to render not just physical objects but moral values and aesthetic qualities. A photographic analogy illustrates the difference between my view of primary imagination and the interpretation of it represented by Richards and supported by Engell. Although traditional cameras cannot be said to render physical objects (because such cameras neither distinguish between objects, nor render them as individuated), some computerized photographic processors can differentiate faces, and other object kinds, from each other and from other object kinds. This digital processing shows that differentiating object kinds by applying rules to visual information can be mechanized.

However, no artificial intelligence mechanism has successfully identified moral values and aesthetic qualities, which values, unlike object kinds, are extramundane, intelligible standards. The Richards-Engell interpretation (which we could call the buses-and-beefsteaks interpretation, after Richards' description) of the primary imagination is analogous to recent digital photo-processors, whereas my interpretation holds such a mechanical process to be unimaginative and unable to recognize moral value and aesthetic quality.

Although Coleridge makes no explicit argument for what I take to be primary imagination's role in experiencing different orders of being (e.g. individuals, substances, corporate groups and legal entities, living and non-living kinds, souls, qualities, values, and Ideas), this is the most important inference that I extrapolate from his theory. Rather than being simply the faculty responsible for revealing desks, trees, buses, and beefsteaks from among different entity-kinds, as standardly received,

Richards-influenced interpretations imply, I argue that primary imagination creates a poetic, lived ontology of values that contextualizes objects, situations, and meanings so our ordinary lives may be enlightened through the aesthetic, sensory presentation of Ideas.

Consistently with my interpretation, Coleridge approvingly quotes Plotinus to help show that imagination creates not just percepts of object kinds,[96] as in Kant's transcendental schematism, but reveals moral and aesthetic qualities by aesthetically expressing Ideas:

> 'To those whose imagination it has never been presented, how beautiful is the countenance of justice and wisdom; and that neither the morning nor the evening star are so fair. For in order to direct the view aright, it behoves that the beholder should have made himself congenerous and similar to the object beheld. Never could the eye have beheld the sun, had not its own essence been soliform,' (*i.e. preconfigured to light by a similarity of essence with that of light*) 'neither can a soul not beautiful attain to an intuition of beauty.' (*Biographia* I, 114-5, quoting *Ennead* I, 6.4 and 1.6.9)

Thus we inhabit worlds of meaning that are possible because we are touched by the primary imagination's creative and symbolic translation of Ideas into aesthetic expression.

According to Engell's interpretation, primary imagination:

> 'unifies' by bringing together sensory data into larger units of understanding, a process that in Coleridge parallels Kant's 'unity of the manifold'. (*Biographia* I, lxxxix)

I dispute this reading on two grounds: Firstly, because what Kant describes as the unity of the manifold is a synthetic and spontaneous act of the understanding, and not an act of imagination. I grant that the issue is complicated here by Kant himself, because in *CPR* edition A the imagination and the understanding are clearly distinct, whereas in edition B, as Heidegger (1962, 166-77) penetratingly explores, Kant retracts the imagination's distinct, mediating, and necessary status by reducing it to a sub-section of the understanding.

Nevertheless, this complication in which Kant integrates imagination within the understanding is wholly absent in Coleridge and antithetic to his clear distinction between the two faculties which he views as potentially and ideally co-operative but radically different. My second objection to Engell's reading is that even if the imagination for Coleridge were, as I argue it cannot be, a replication of Kant's synthesis

[96] He does not specify here whether he means primary or secondary imagination; I take him to mean primary, although it is not so important here, as he holds these faculties to differ in degree, not kind.

of the manifold of intuition, this synthesizing work would still be too rule-bound and mechanical a process to describe Coleridge's essentially creative 'repetition in the finite mind'.

Primary imagination provides, I argue, an unforced, poetic, yet not entirely voluntarily controlled aspectual perception of Ideality in everyday life. Thus primary imagination allows a day to be enjoyed as glorious and for that glory to be felt and known, instead of the weather being simply noticed according to its material qualities and then found by associated impressions, via fancy, to have metaphorical similarities with other things. Primary imagination, unlike fancy, does not metaphorize. Instead, it aesthetically presents Ideal aspects to be contemplated in its Ideal objects. If imagination finds, with Blake's 'Auguries of Innocence', 'a World in a grain of sand', then the same depth of sensuous infinitude, the same intricacies and importances of a world are to be found in a grain of sand ([c. 1803] 1994, 127).

The primary imagination, in my interpretation, can be termed *necessary* because it is a pre-condition of value-rich experience. It is, I hold, also responsible for creating prejudices and pre-conceptions, and the need for aesthetic reflection on our tastes and desires is an area that I explore in Part Four. The primary imagination is more spontaneous than the secondary, and it initiates the creation of experience rich in moral and aesthetic potential, which potential the secondary imagination may consciously and reflectively transform into artistic and philosophical works. The secondary imagination differs in being voluntary to a greater degree. Its creative power can remain dormant in individuals, or it can be stirred to activity, becoming the poetic or the philosophic imagination, both of which require a close internal attention, with the latter aimed at truth and the former at those truths that also please.

Coleridge holds this voluntary, secondary imagination to be superior to the primary imagination responsible for spontaneous creative perception and as a faculty that is not equally developed in all people. It represents the fullest exertion we may achieve, controlled by 'the free-will, our only absolute self' (*Biographia* II, 114). Because the secondary imagination is voluntary, its creative acts carry personal and social responsibility. The secondary imagination uses materials gathered and shaped by the primary imagination and is able to idealize and bring these into harmony with the whole mind.

Thus the secondary imagination may create and recreate according to the 'energies of reason' (*Statesman's Manual*, 29). Although not everybody achieves the creative

heights of poetic imagination, everybody is more or less able to appreciate the fruits of poetic imagination, and this appreciation is itself an exercise of poetic imagination. As Coleridge says, to hear a poem as poetry one must become, even if momentarily, a poet (*Lit. Lects* I, 251). Once the artist has created the artwork, be it poetry, visual art, music or some other composition, the result can be approached via the senses, energizing the public's imagination and understanding with aesthetically conveyed reason.

The secondary imagination can work as poetic or philosophic imagination. This philosophic imagination is a transcendental power whose 'sources must be far higher and far inward' (*Biographia* I, 239) than the ordinary mode of consciousness. It is 'the sacred power of self-intuition' (*Biographia* I, 241), able to work from the heaven-descended Delphic imperative: 'Know thyself!' In philosophic imagination, consciousness self-intuitively enters into contemplation. Relating this consciousness to nature, the thinker:

> at once discovers and recoils from the discovery, that the *reality*, the *objective* truth, of the objects he has been adoring, derives its whole and sole evidence from an obscure sensation, which he is alike unable to resist or comprehend, which compels him to contemplate as without and independent of himself what yet he could not contemplate at all, were it not a modification of *his own being* (*Friend* I, 509)

Because the forms and categories of consciousness are constitutive of experience, the mind realizes that in self-contemplation it has also already been contemplating nature as *natura naturans* (nature naturing, or the processes of nature, to reiterate, as Ch. 2.6 explained, pages 121-2 above) and not just the apparent phenomena of nature as *natura naturata* (nature natured, or the outward forms of nature).

This self we simultaneously are and perceive. Nevertheless, the perceived self is not equivalent to the thing-in-itself, but is merely an empirical phenomenon. Kant is very cautious about the ramifications of this insight, and he refers to the formal condition of the transcendental ego, the 'I' in its purely moral consideration beyond the laws of phenomena, and it is thus noumenal. Its counterpart, the empirical ego, is the phenomenal self subject to psychological laws. Post-Kantian thinkers such as Fichte, Schelling, and Schopenhauer seek in the noumenal self an entrance into the wider universe of transcendent reality and a return to metaphysics. Coleridge, in similar vein, thinks that the self-intuition of the philosophic imagination directly accesses *natura naturans* by virtue of its own existence in this mode of reality.

The secondary imagination is positioned to convey the non-phenomenal Ideas of reason, free from cause and effect, to the higher understanding. As fancy brings the

materials of sensation up to the lower understanding, imagination draws down the Ideas of reason to the higher understanding.[97] Fancy mobilizes the stream of association of fixities and definites taken from perception, offering them up to the understanding as ready-made or found objects.

[97] Coleridge distinguishes understanding enlightened by Ideas as the higher understanding. Unenlightened, the faculty remains the mechanical, or lower understanding. See his sketch reproduced at the beginning of the previous chapter, and in a table at the end of Part One.

3.4 The Place of Association: the imageable and the conceivable

From the materials of memory and fancy, then, the understanding may formulate a picture model of the world, wherein only the imageable is accepted as the conceivable. This was the thinking process, Coleridge noted, as theorized by Empiricists such as Locke who insisted that we need distinct images when defining words and concepts. We may further note that Locke's view is in line with Aristotle, who holds, against Plato, that 'the soul never thinks without an image' (*On the Soul*, 450a).

By contrast, Coleridge warns against mistaking distinct images for clear conceptions. Fancy presents its fixed and definite visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory perceptions amid the stream of association. The thinker rests, while in the act of composition or in the ordinary act of trying to recollect a name, word, or face. Coleridge likens the thinking mind, alternately resting and pulsing on the stream of association, to a pond skater, or water strider. Like the water-insect, the thinker uses the stream's currents, those, that is, of the stream of association, rather than resting passive in their pull. Thus the mind sometimes actively resists the stream's current, and at other times allows itself to be carried along by it, passively following currents of association, winning its way along the stream, until it reaches the sought-for object.

This process occurs when searching for the right word, for a misplaced object, or in trying to work out the best direction for thought to take next. This active-passive process also occurs at a higher level of poetic activity. Thus, he carefully observes:

> There are . . . two powers at work . . . active and passive . . . [with] an intermediate faculty, which is at once both active and passive. In philosophical language, we must denominate this intermediate faculty in all its degrees and determinations, the IMAGINATION. But, in common language, and especially on the subject of poetry, we appropriate the name to a superior degree of the faculty, joined to a superior voluntary control over it. (*Biographia* I, 124-5)

Coleridge shows that association can account for effortless streams of consciousness and flights of fancy that can be worked into aesthetic value when directed with talent, yet themselves barely require exertion. Enjoying the current of association, though an indolent activity, is nonetheless amusing enough to be valued in 'The Eolian Harp':

> I stretch my limbs at noon,
> Whilst through my half-clos'd eye-lids I behold
> The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main.
> And tranquil muse upon tranquillity;
> Full many a thought uncall'd and undetain'd,
> And many idle flitting phantasies,
> Traverse my indolent and passive brain

The enjoyment of this idle, fantasying tranquillity is nevertheless checked by a more serious concern with the valued actualities of wife and home, the genuinely appreciated sources of his restful mood.

Associationism, syncretically retained in Coleridge's system, accounts for the passive currents available to thought. Imagination, however, becomes the mediator between conceptual understanding and the Ideas of reason. From the perception of phenomena, or *natura naturata*, the lower understanding conceives the sum total of the facts and phenomena of the senses as 'nature in the passive sense' (*Phil. Lects* II, 851). *Natura naturans*, in contrast, denotes nature as power, not product. It is commonly assumed that if something is not a phenomenon, then it must be an abstraction. But the referents of *natura naturans* are no more abstractions, and no less real, than, for example, gravity.[98] The *naturata-naturans* distinction is active in Coleridge's emphasis that the act of thinking is not itself a thought. Much of our thinking is unconscious, and as Coleridge says, in man:

> much lies *below* his own Consciousness (*Notebooks* I, 1554)

The products of thinking, thoughts, more often achieve consciousness, and are part of the:

> spontaneous consciousness natural to all reflecting beings. (*Biographia* I, 164)

Thinking, however, is not so spontaneously conscious. The nature aimed at by imagination and reason is *natura naturans*, analogous with the thinking, and not with its product, thought.

The act of thinking is more adequate to the Idea than the more easily reproduced and schematized representation of that act. For example, an imagined line with no breadth has a perfection that is the ideal of but is otherwise absent from any physical image of a line. A line without breadth between two stars, for example, has the illusory aesthetic quality of being almost sensuously present. Similarly, natural laws are neither phenomenal things nor abstractions. We may derive working hypotheses of natural laws through abstraction from phenomena, but is not equivalent to the laws themselves. Because the prevailing Empiricist philosophy of his nation holds that every knowable object was either a phenomenon or an abstraction therefrom, Coleridge observes that 'we have not yet attained to a SCIENCE of Nature' (*Statesman's Manual,* 49).

[98] Cf. Barfield, [1971] 2006, 24.

The understanding processes only phenomena and their relations. Delving into phenomena, it is led to other phenomena, until it might then select what Coleridge calls a protophenomenon, reminiscent of Goethe's *Ur-phänomenen*:

> The naturalist, who can not . . . see, that one fact is often worth a thousand, as including them all in itself, and that it first *makes* all the other *facts*,—who has not the head to comprehend, the soul to reverence, a *central* experiment or observation (what the Greeks would perhaps have called a *protophaenomenon*), —will never receive an auspicious answer from the oracle of nature. (*Friend* I, 481)

At the technical limits of experimental possibility, it is only by means of the imagination that the protophenomenon can be recognized as an illustrative case of a pattern, tendency, or law.

For the understanding to seek phenomena in protophenomena would be to revert to fancy, inventing picture-theories of turtles all the way down.[99] Representations of proto-phenomena would include the salient phenomena of magnetism, electricity, crystal formation, and organic growth. Following Bruno, and Böhme, Coleridge deduces from these proto-phenomena the law of:

> polarity, or the essential dualism of Nature, arising out of its productive unity, and still tending to reaffirm it, either as equilibrium, indifference or identity. (*SWF*, 518)

[99] The turtles all the way down *reductio ad absurdum* of certain kinds of physical foundationalism traces to Locke (*Essay,* Bk 2, Ch. XXIII, §2), probably elaborating a similar story in one of Purchas' volumes of sailors' narratives; one of Purchas' accounts also inspired Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan'. Locke writes that anyone who declares properties to inhere in substances is like the Indian who said the world rests on an elephant, which rests on a tortoise, 'but being again pressed to know what gave support to the broad-backed tortoise, replied—something, he knew not what.'

3.5 The Transcendence of Reason

> This again is the mystery and the dignity of our human nature, that we cannot give up our reason, without giving up at the same time our individual personality. (*Friend* I, 97)

Coleridge regards 'the mystery and the dignity of our human nature' as the foundation that reason provides for individual personality. Reason, in this view, establishes individual personality by transcending it, a view shared with Heraclitus (Fragment 2), who believes that:

> most men live as if each had a private intelligence of his own

when in fact,

> the *Logos* is common to all.

The act of thinking individuates the thinker, who ascertains states of affairs and judges the veracity of propositions. Thinking involves detachment insofar as it employs concepts abstracted from experience. It is also a reattachment insofar as it approaches truth. Individuality is intuited in the act of thinking, whose product, the thought, can be conveyed to other thinking beings, who may in turn test its verity according to experience and the light of reason.

It is 'the Queen Bee in the Hive of error,' Coleridge colourfully cautions, to identify 'universal Reason with each man's individual Understanding' (*Constitution*, 171), for the individual understanding creates most of its concepts from experience, and each such concept is nuanced to the sort of personal history familiar to biographers, confessors, and psychoanalysts. Not invariably, but often, Coleridge uses the term notion to describe something mental but lower than a Thought. For example, he describes notion as below thought in what editors McFarland and Halmi call Fragment 1 of his *Opus Maximum*, an edition of Coleridge's projected magnum opus assembled from notes and fragments and published for the first time in 2002. Elsewhere, at *Notebook* 2, 2208, he writes that:

> each man will universalize his notions & yet each is variously finite

These notions are equivalent to Locke's ideas,[100] i.e. sense impressions, atoms of remembrances, and the flotsam that sways and jostles in mechanical, mental

[100] Because Coleridge writes *Idea* (often without a capital) for the Platonic *eidos* or *idea*, he needs another term for what Locke denotes by *idea*. In the present work, *notion* conveniently and generally stands for *concept*, *sense of something*, or *Lockean idea*, depending on context and when using a word such as *concept*, *understanding*, or *idea* might confuse.

association. While a notion in two minds becomes two notions (my notion of 'dog', or 'mother', or even 'this dog' and 'that mother', is not your notion of the same), it is equally erroneous to believe that the same Idea in two minds is two Ideas and not one.[101] Freedom is freedom, life is life, truth, goodness and beauty, are each one Idea, despite our varying notions. As ever, Coleridge confidently articulates his Platonism in direct terms.

The Ideas of reason transform the understanding into a human understanding. If the understanding ignores the downshine of reason, then it will remain merely mechanical, rather than fully human. By this downshine, I refer to the Neo-Platonic irradiation of Intellect, Soul, and Nature by reason, which is present in the lower levels, but not in a conscious or reflective sense. The dangers of understanding everything mechanistically, including humanity and mind, faced Coleridge's empirically reductionist contemporaries. The mere understanding would never transcend ordering sense data according to cause and effect, and to assign concepts to them. The name truth would denote nothing beyond sincerity, as each individual would conceive his or her concepts as idiosyncratically unique, varying from corresponding concepts in the understandings of other individuals.

Coleridge believed that if the understanding is viewed as the apex of the human mind, it would have nothing superior to itself to sustain it at its limits. It is reason that confers individuality to a person, and its light:

> shines downward into the Understanding. Here it is always more or less refracted, and differently in every different individual. (*Marginalia* I, 123)

At the same time, while reason cures the idiosyncrasy of the unenlightened understanding, it must undergo a process of self-correction to dust off false or inadequate conceptual accretions and become:

> re-converted into *Life* to rectify itself and regain its universality (*Marginalia* I, 123)

Maintaining the principle of polarity, Coleridge conceived of reason as two modalities, negative and positive. Negative reason operates in the understanding, enabling abstraction in terms of universals. While negative reason pertains to the understanding and is ruled by the law of contradiction, positive reason is connected with the imagination and gives rise to the unity of experienced nature. Negative reason:

[101] Insofar, that is, as Ideas are in minds. One can think profitably here of the analogies in Plato's *Parmenides* of the sail and the day, which consider participation in Ideas.

> consists wholly in a man's power of seeing, whether any two conceptions, which happen to be in his mind, are, or are not, in contradiction with each other, it follows of necessity, not only that all men have reason, but that every man has it in the same degree. (*Friend* I, 159)

Negative reason is thus reason unconscious of itself, operating only to the degree with which the understanding can cope. The understanding orders its objects according to sameness and difference, which ultimately forces that detachment from nature prevalent in an age fascinated by mechanical understanding.

Negative reason, then, retains only the mechanical, separable elements of experience. It deals with *natura naturata* and is not equipped to approach *natura naturans*. Such an understanding, if left alone, unromantically analyses phenomena until it conceives a nature bereft of life. The principle of contradiction, as the negative reason in the understanding, can only work by calculating within the sphere of fixities and definites. With entities considered only in detachment, *natura naturans* evades the net of this stop-start Eleatic reasoning.

Negative reasoning in the understanding becomes a master of distinction and division. Rhees (1998, 23) describes the limits of such technique, skill, and calculation:

> The people who argued with Socrates and Plato may have thought that language was just a collection of techniques, and that that was what understanding is: knowing the technique.
>
> . . . Is understanding just competence? Is language a skill? Whether speaking is a technique; whether thinking is a technique; whether living is. . . . And that would be the same as solving problems of life by calculation.

Negative reason categorizes phenomena by understanding what each thing is not, relative to other things, yet it remains unable to state positively what anything essentially is, as Plato's Socratic, aporetic dialogues suggest. But even in this stage, a glimmer of reason in its positive mode may shine, for the principle of contradiction has the quality of universality, which may impress the understanding and awaken the:

> unindividual and transcendent character of the Reason as a presence to the mind. (*Logic* I, 69)

When the principle of contradiction itself is considered, the understanding turns its attention from outward sense and focuses inwards (because attention is forced away from outward objects) and upwards (because for Coleridge, reason is above nature).[102] While sense, fancy and the understanding are part of nature, and imagination is part of

[102] See *Letters* V, 137-8, discussing reason in its human and trans-human aspects.

human nature, reason is independent of natural phenomena, which it irradiates, such that, for example, instinct is incipient, somnambulant reason. Considering the principle of contradiction itself, the understanding turns from *natura naturata* to *natura naturans*.

Imagination finds itself as nature naturing, vitally mediating between and thus harmonizing the polarities. Contemplation of the principle of contradiction has a revolutionary effect in Coleridge's system because therein the understanding begins to wonder what indicates contradictions as such. If passive reason can indicate contradictions, it must itself transcend them in order to draw them together as presentations to the understanding, which may then hold them apart. The first glimpse of Coleridgean positive reason is in polarity:

> THERE IS, strictly speaking, NO PROPER OPPOSITION BUT BETWEEN THE TWO POLAR FORCES OF ONE AND THE SAME POWER. (*Friend* I, 94)

Polarity, 'a living and generative interpenetration', not 'a mere balance or compromise of the two powers' (*Statesman's Manual*, 90) may not be grasped by the naked understanding, which conceives of everything in detachment, related by cause and effect, but only mechanically related. Where the understanding as negative reason wrangles with logical opposites as contradictories, the imagination holds polar opposites, which are mutually generative, inclusive and not exclusive, and therefore capable of distinction, but not of division. Coleridge therefore situated imagination above the understanding and approaching reason, rather than between the understanding and intuition, as Kant first places it, revising it into a compartment within the conceptual understanding in *CPR*, B.

3.6 Beyond Empiricism: the bridging imagination

Coleridge's imagination bridges between understanding and reason, and this is clearly seen in the marginal annotation to his copy of Tennemann's *Geschichte*. This sketch schematizes his system of faculties in terms of the lowest and highest in the human scale. That Coleridge drew these scales twice, laying them side by side with the lowest to highest on the left and the highest to lowest on the right highlights how the faculties are complementarities along a pole. The polarity is emphasized by his inclusion of a bar, on both scales, between the higher and lower understanding. When the understanding is impregnated with the imagination, then understanding 'becomes intuitive, and a living power' (*Statesman's Manual*, 69).

The polarity suggests mutual generation. In his writings, as I indicated earlier, reason is described as above both nature and the human scale, such that our search for wisdom may approach reason, but reason is no faculty. Coleridge consistently denies that these powers are discrete faculties. Considered in terms of what we might call the epistemological pole, the powers are seen in their proper light, as incapable of separate operation, although they can be distinguished theoretically. Nevertheless, while sense, fancy, understanding and imagination are human faculties, reason is above the human, although it is something that the human mind might approach.

Coleridge cautions against dividing in order to distinguish, and, which is worse, distinguishing in order to divide (*Reflection*, 33).[103] Elsewhere, on the same theme, he notes that:

> in every act of mind the man unites the properties of sense, understanding and reason. Nevertheless it is of great practical importance, that these distinctions should be made and understood. (*Friend* I, 177n)

He holds that the primary and secondary imaginations are one power under different degrees of voluntary control. The secondary imagination unites the clarity of the understanding with the depth of reason. The primary imagination, much less reflectively controlled, unites:

> the plenitude of the sense with the comprehensibility of the understanding. (*Statesman's Manual*, 69)

Imagination draws Ideas down to the understanding bringing resonance and depth to the

[103] Copy F (1825), has the autograph note: 'i.e. that distinguishes in matters of *opinion* in order to divide *persons*, thus converting innocent difference into discord and alienation.' Cf. *Friend* II, 104n.

whole mind. It generates symbols to convey Ideas of reason, which symbolic aim Coleridge expresses as:

> That reconciling and mediatory power, which incorporating the reason in images of the sense, and organizing . . . the flux of the senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of reason, gives birth to a system of symbols . . . consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors. (*Statesman's Manual*, 29)

While negative reason in the understanding works with the law of contradiction, positive reason in the imagination gives rise to the unity of experienced nature. Imagination relates constantly changing and aspect-shifting appearances to the permanent energies of reason. This relation allows a consciousness of temporality and eternity through awareness of mutable phenomena and the permanence of their essences.

Fancy, in contrast, has no unifying power, and proceeds by mechanical association.[104] At *Biographia* I, 101, Coleridge begins his history and critique of association with Aristotle, 'the wise Stagyrite' who delivers a 'just theory without pretending to an hypothesis'. Aristotle's *On Memory* surveys facts of association without framing these in a guiding fiction or fancied state-of-affairs, unlike the newer associationist theories that Coleridge targets.[105]

Cartesian association, for example, fancied 'living and intelligent fluids, that etch and re-etch engravings on the brain', as Coleridge glossed it, revealing Descartes' theory of nervous spirits in brain fibres as the model for the Locke-Hartleian brand of associationism (*Biographia* I, 100). Later associationists hypothesized that ether oscillating along solid fibres and hollow tubes, or electric light and the elective affinities of chemical compositions, were the forces driving association. Coleridge's threefold objection to these hypotheses was that they were: (1) unscientific flights of fancy; (2) naïve prejudices of 'the despotism of the eye' (*Biographia* I, 74),[106] as if only a more powerful microscope were necessary for confirmation; and (3) metaphysically materialistic, whereas Aristotle's theory was ontologically neutral.

Coleridge did not dismiss association, retaining it within his system as the 'universal law of passive fancy' (*Biographia* I, 104). Nevertheless, as Sutton (1998,

[104] Fancy and imagination are more than poetic modes, they are mental powers necessary for experience.

[105] Aristotle, distinguishes memory from recollection. For him, memory relies on sense-perception and images, while recollection –advanced in 'fast learners' – is more intelligent, using images only accidentally.

[106] Cf. *SWF* II, 900 writing of 'desensualizing the mind, and emancipating it first from the tyranny of the Eye'.

261) notes, his critique:

> reveals a deeply felt rejection of the implications of association for dearly defended values and beliefs, significant in understanding the reception and perceived threat of neurophilosophical associationism and distributed models then and now.

He rejects the implications of associationism, while syncretically retaining it at the lower levels of his system, by arguing that the associationism draws false conclusions in presuming that it accounts for all mental functioning and thought:

> The image-forming . . . power, the imagination in its passive sense . . . Fancy=Phantasy, . . . may . . . be compared to the Gorgon Head, which *looked* death into every thing—and this not by accident, but from the nature of the faculty itself . . . to give consciousness to the Subject by presenting to it its conceptions *objectively* (*Notebooks* 3, 4066)

Note how he here explains his reason for the necessity to transcend what he elsewhere calls the despotism of the eye, which necessity pertains also, by similarity, of the image. The drive to image everything, or the physically specular drive, distinguished from theoretical (contemplative) speculation, *looks* a fixity and deadness into things. For this fixing gaze, the Gorgon Head image is most apt. The nature of this faculty is not by itself, however, bad, because it is required to give rise to self-consciousness in the thinking, conceiving subject. From out of fancy's *objectively* presented fixities and definites, which are conceptions given an imagistic objectivity, i.e. a likeness to external objects, arises a consciousness that can attend to and intend its own thinking and thoughts as to external things (to which they are like thanks to the fancy's images of them), and hence this consciousness becomes a self-consciousness. Coleridge continues in the same note of April 1811:

> Life may be inferred, even as intelligence is from black marks on white paper, but the black marks themselves are truly 'the dead letter'. Here then is the error, not in the faculty itself, without which there would be no fxation, consequently, no distinct perception or conception, but in the gross idolatry of those who abuse it, & make that the goal & end which should only be a means of arriving at it. Is it any excuse to him who treats a living being as inanimate Body, that we cannot arrive at the knowledge of the living Being but thro' the Body which is its Symbol & outward & visible Sign? (*Notebooks* 3, 4066)

Empiricism's chief error, then, is to take fancy, or association, as the highest end of the human mind, when it is only a means in the process of forming concepts from experience, which process is a fixation on distinct perceptions or conceptions. He astutely observes that Empiricist theories truly apply not to the healthy human mind, but only to a state of light-headedness:

> There is in truth but one state to which this theory applies at all, namely, that of complete

> light-headedness; and even to this it applies but partially, because the will and reason are perhaps never wholly suspended. (*Biographia* I, 112)

He holds that the result of perception is neither a true subject nor true object but rather an original union of both. Imagination blends thoughts and intuitions, allowing us to see beyond transitory phenomena and into *natura naturans* as 'We see into the life of things'.[107] Coleridge does not expect his imaginative position, however, to be well received, or even understood, by the Empiricists of his day:

> Every system, which is under the necessity of using terms not familiarized by the metaphysicks in fashion, will be described as written in an unintelligible style, and the author must expect the charge of having substituted learned jargon for clear conception; while, according to the creed of our modern philosophers, nothing is deemed a clear conception, but what is representable by a distinct image. Thus the *conceivable* is reduced within the bounds of the *picturable*. (*Biographia* I, 287-8)

Nevertheless, his fancy-imagination distinction retained a necessary place for association. Finding associationism unable to account for artistic genius and creativity, he presented the transcendental argument that: (A) the genuine creativity of imaginative poetry cannot be accounted for by the associationist theory; (B) genuinely creative poetry exists; therefore (C) associationism cannot explain the human mind. Retaining elements of Empiricism while abandoning Empiricist reductionism, he upholds Leibniz's injunction for a true philosophy: 'at once to explain and collect the fragments of truth scattered through systems apparently the most incongruous', recommending a selective syncretism (quoted at *Biographia* I, 244). Thus Coleridge describes his syncretic system as attempting:

> to reduce all knowledges into harmony. It opposes no other system, but shows what was true in each; and how that which was true in the particular, in each of them became error, because it was only half the truth (*Table Talk* I, 248)

[107] Wordsworth, 'Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey' (l. 49), the last poem (in both original versions) of the *Lyrical Ballads*, (1798; 1802).

3.7 Desynonymizing Fancy and Imagination

Coleridge's term 'desynonymization' in *Biographia* helps explain his distinction between fancy and imagination. These terms require explanation because he inverts their traditional meanings. 'Fancy', from the Greek *phantasia*, connotes a free play of the mind not necessarily tied to definite images. The Latin *imaginatio* traditionally referred to the capacity to generate images in the mind. In Coleridge's use, imagination becomes the more creative aptitude and fancy that by which we create fixed and definite images. He explains,

> It is not, I own, easy to conceive a more apposite translation of the Greek *Phantasia* than the Latin *Imaginatio*; but it is equally true that in all societies there exists an instinct of growth, a certain collective, unconscious good sense working progressively to desynonymize those words originally of the same meaning (*Biographia* I, 82-3)

Examples from English poetry illustrate his distinction. Here is one example of fancy, from Butler's *Hudibras*:

> And like a lobster boyl'd, the Morn
> From black to red began to turn.

No power could sanely fuse the images in this burlesque example of fancy at play. Butler's lines are as burlesque as what Coleridge (*Biographia* I, 84) quotes as Otway's fanciful:

> Lutes, lobsters, seas of milk, and ships of amber,[108]

While Butler's lobster-boyl'd morn never escapes the ludicrous to repose in the thoughtful, Otway's line successfully expresses his heroine's madness, and therefore brings the reader to intelligent reflection, thereby exaggerating the absurdity. Exemplifying unintentionally comic failure, Coleridge (*Biographia* I, 24) cites,

> a ludicrous instance in the poem of a young tradesman:
>
> > No more will I endure love's pleasing pain,
> > Or round my *heart's leg* tie his galling chain.

Awareness of potential poetic failure cannot always prevent it, as when Coleridge describes Mont Blanc below Venus:

> Hast thou a charm to stay the morning-star
> In his deep course? So long he seems to pause
> On thy bald awful head, O sovran Blanc.

[108] Coleridge misquotes: *lobsters* reads *laurels* in Otway's, *Venice Preserv'd*, V.i.369.

(*Hymn before Sunrise, Poetical Works* I.2, 717-22)

Although Coleridge himself crafted the fanciful conceit of a mountain charming a planet to pause – thereby expressing an attractive compulsion in the scene – the distracting image of the planet perched mosquito-like on the Mount's 'bald awful head' must be unintended.

Fancy in art does not inevitably lead to poetic failure. It can be used to exquisite effect, as in this masterly example from William Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*:

> Full gently now she takes him by the hand,
> A lily prison'd in a gaol of snow,
> Or ivory in an alabaster band;
> So white a friend engirts so white a foe.

Aggregated similes represent the goddess' hand taking her mortal lover's. In each image – lily, gaol, snow, ivory, and alabaster – likeness is shown, but they neither cohere nor modify each other. This distancing effect emphasizes the categorical difference between Venus and Adonis. The images have 'no connexion natural or moral, but are yoked together . . . by means of some accidental coincidence' (*Table Talk*, 489-90: 23 June, 1834). They 'remain when put together the same as when apart' (Richards' phrase, 1960, 77), rather than cohering into an interpenetrative fusion altering both to suggest an Idea. Coleridge speculates that Shakespeare employed fancy to distance his poetry from a cloying subject matter. He explains that Shakespeare does not just write passionately about his own passions, but he masters his fancy and becomes:

> by power of Imagination another Thing—Proteus, a river, a lion, yet still the God felt to be there
> —Then his thinking faculty & thereby perfect abstraction from himself—he writes exactly as if as if of an other planet, or as describing the movement of two Butterflies—
> (*Lit. Lects* I, 69-70)

Remaining with *Venus and Adonis*, Coleridge now shows an example of poetic imagination:

> Look! how bright a star shooteth from the sky
> So glides he in the night from Venus' eye.

He comments,

> How many images and feelings are here brought together without effort and without discord, in the beauty of Adonis, the rapidity of his flight, the yearning, yet hopelessness, of the enamored gazer, while a shadowy ideal character is thrown over the whole!

Imagination fuses separable meanings into one whole. Importantly, the reader is also

active in this process. Coleridge observes that:

> You feel him to be a poet, inasmuch as for a time he has made you one—an active creative being. (*Lit. Lects* I, 251)

Imagination thus creates meaningful wholes in its fusions, where fancy provides only novel, but separate, conjunctions. With imagination, as Coleridge says of *Venus and Adonis*:

> You seem to be *told* nothing; but to see & hear every thing. (*Lit. Lects* I, 242)

Illustrating this difference between enlarged, holistic meaning and mere novelty of associated images, he suggests,

> You may conceive the difference in kind between the Fancy and the Imagination in this way, that if the check of the senses and the reason were withdrawn, the first would become delirium and the last mania. (*Table Talk* II, 489, 23 June, 1834)

This delirium is a confused excitement, sometimes hallucinatory. Delirium's excess of associated images is contrasted with mania's pursuit of ever-encompassing meaning.

For Coleridge, fancy's fixities and definites are opaque, in that one cannot see through them to what they represent. They simply stand for what they represent. Imagination, however, employs the symbol's translucence. Not only does the symbol allow the intended object, often an Idea, to be seen in and through itself, it allows contemplation of the non-phenomenal object in the first place, just as light is not clearly seen and considered as itself until it is held in a crystal. These non-phenomenal objects are Ideas, and now that we have discussed imagination in detail, we can consider how it is required to approach these Ideas.

3.8 Imagining Ideas: elevating the place and role of imagination

By his own account, Coleridge was a Platonist. Although Plato illustrated philosophy with some of the discipline's most beautiful and recurrent images, he accords a lowly official role to imagination. In the *Ion*, Socrates, in Plato's account, diagnoses poetic oration, or *rhapsode*, as magnetism rather than mastery, calling it a divinely inspired *dunamis*, and not a rational *technē*. Although this divine inspiration indicates poetry's exalted origin, it is presented as a gift from the gods, and not as the hard-won product of mastery and expertise that is Philosophy. We cannot all be Sibylline prophets or heroic lovers, nor is the fate of inspired truths written on leaves to be scattered by winds likely to enlighten or be highly valued, but we may all endeavour to apply reason and to become more truthful.

Imagination's lowly status in Plato's system contrasts starkly with its importance for Coleridge, for whom it is a divine echo in the human mind. Although one could argue, following the divine gift thread, that this is also true in Plato, the place and role of imagination in their respective systems diverges. In Coleridge, imagination approaches the Ideas, translating them aesthetically so that Ideality informs and enriches existence. For Plato, to reiterate, imagination deals explicitly only with reflections, shadows, and copies, and it is this position that Coleridge transforms. He modifies Platonic epistemology, allowing a contemplation of Ideas approximating the Plotinian model. Thus he presents a romanticized Platonism whereby imagination creates a sensuous-intellectual expression of reality. In the analogy of the Divided Line, Plato distinguishes truly real Forms (*eide*), or Ideas (*ideai*), from experience's sensible appearances.

For Plato, imagination is three removes from reality, i.e. the Forms. With Plotinus, however, and with Iamblichus's and Proclus's expanded, theurgistic and sacramental accounts, one can speculate through the beauty of aesthetic form as an initial, sensuous access to the Ideas that would otherwise be inaccessible, or at least exceedingly difficult and unlikely, to some otherwise non-theoretical human minds.[109] Plotinus's and Proclus's accounts especially inform Coleridge's view of an aesthetic approach to contemplation of Ideas through the symbol.[110] Elsewhere, Plato describes imagination as an 'inner artist painting pictures in the soul' (*Philebus*, 39c). This inner artist provides a mnemonic service, because 'memory is like a block of wax into which our perceptions

[109] Cf. Struck, 2010.
[110] Cf. Barth (1977, rev. 2001, esp. Ch. 2) for a sacramental account of Coleridgean symbol aestheticizing Ideas. For sacramentalism in the Chaldean Oracles, see Majercik's Introduction in Julianus, ([2nd C. AD] 1989, rev. 2013, 23-5).

and thoughts stamp impressions' (*Theaetetus*, 191c-d).[111]

For Plato, thinking with images involves a lower consciousness of reality than even sense perception, as considering shadows in the cave is a lower mental activity than perceiving the actual objects. His view that the highest mental activity is contemplation of Ideas beyond image and concept is at odds with Aristotle's aforementioned view that, 'the soul never thinks without a mental image (*phantasma*)'. On this point, Coleridge seems nearer to Aristotle's position than to Plato's, but Coleridge will in fact contradict Aristotle, in saying that there are dangers to thinking without images, thus going against Aristotle's assertion that doing so is impossible.

Coleridge, like Kant, recognizes the danger of thinking with concepts only, unaided by images and especially by empirical intuitions, which imageless thinking Kant demonstrated as leading to the antinomies of reason. However, Coleridge does not contradict Plato's view that there is no possibility of our thinking in Ideas, which are objective realities that thinking moves towards, rather than tools, as concepts are, with which one may think. Ideas are the ultimate ends of thought, and not its means, and thus they can be contemplated but never conceptualized.

Of Josiah Wedgwood II's late governess, Miss Dennis, an aspiring poet with whom Coleridge sometimes conversed, he writes,

> She interested me a good deal; she appears . . . to have been injured by going out of the common way without any of that Imagination, which if it be a Jack o'Lanthorn to lead us out of that way is however at the same time a Torch to light us whither we are going. A whole Essay, might be written on the Danger of *thinking* without Images. (*Letters* I, 362)

He therefore holds that in any serious thinking, images and concepts should be illuminated by Ideas of reason, and deepened by their contemplation.

He distinguishes Ideas from 'conceptions of the Understanding', paralleling Plato's distinction between Ideas, or *eide*, and the *mathemata* and theorems of *dianoia*, or conceptual understanding. With this distinction comes the problem of defining the Ideas of reason. If Ideas of reason transcend concepts, then their definition appears to be impossible. A conception of an Idea could only be an abstract reflection and would remain a concept. Coleridge is very much aware of this problem:

> Ideas and Conceptions are utterly disparate, and Ideas and Images are the negatives of

[111] Descartes ([1641] 1994, 87), Mediation II describes this image-making faculty's limitations when he imagines the wax ball's essence: 'not properly perceived by the senses nor by the faculty of imagination, but only by the intellect alone'.

> each other. (Cited in Muirhead, 1930, 97)[112]

He expresses the same thought annotating a volume of Hooker:

> no Idea can be rendered by a conception. An Idea is essentially inconceivable. (Marginalia II, 1145)

This problem also exercises the Neo-Platonists, for whom truths about reality cannot be adequately disclosed in discursive language, with ordinary propositional forms suited only to describing the intermediate reality of appearances and not the fuller reality of Ideas, or beyond that, the One. Coleridge, like his Neo-Platonic predecessors, finds no convenient access to Ideas through concepts.

In Ideas, as approached by the symbolizing imagination, Coleridge sees the union of the universal with the particular. He describes a particular's defining universal as its Law, which Laws are constitutive of phenomena and 'In the order of thought necessarily antecedent' to them, revealing an intuition of the Ideas distinguished, '*not from the real, but from the phenomenal*' (Cited in Muirhead, 1930, 98). He presents us with experienced objects and asks us to consider their predicates as universals. In the light of Ideas, sensible particulars are seen and understood as individualized traces of universals. Law is responsible for the antecedent and constitutive universal. Coleridge understands Plato's Ideas as truly objective Living Laws, unlike phenomena, which are necessarily perspectival (*Friend* I, 492).

The aim of these Living Laws in human life is:

> to present that which is necessary as a whole consistently with the moral freedom of each particular act. (Cited in Muirhead, 1930, 99)

Coleridge sees evidence of a directing Idea as:

> a chain of necessity, the particular links of which are free acts. (Cited in Muirhead, 1930, 99)

Hence,

> You may see an Idea working in a man by watching his tastes and enjoyments, though he may hitherto have no consciousness of any other reasoning than that of conception and fact. (*Notebooks* 4, 5409)

Here we have the Romantic notion, derived from Plotinus, of the Idea accessed by imagination and working in and through the aesthetic, sensual, and immediate modes of

[112] This and the following citations from Muirhead are from the Folio Notebook (which Muirhead calls MS. C), which is held at the Huntington Library, Pasadena: CA, which entries are published in *Notebooks* 4 and 5.

pleasure, taste, and preference.

This aesthetic movement towards Ideas is, however, only dimly conscious and rarely reflected upon. Thus Coleridge writes,

> Hence lastly all the various characters of Ideas—the Fewest among the Few that live in their Light, and yet all that live in their power—the Idea working *in* them (Notebooks, 4, 5495)

This entry, not intended for publication, Muirhead (1930, 99) elegantly paraphrases as: 'All men live in the power of Ideas which work in them, though few live in their light.' Thus for Coleridge, human reason and its relation to Ideas is a largely unconscious affair for most people. While Coleridge esteems Aristotle as the undisputed master of the Understanding, Plato surveys the Understanding from a higher vantage and:

> looked down upon, from the Throne of Actual Ideas, or Living, Inborn, Essential Truths. (*Table Talk* I, 173)

How may we hope to ascend to these Ideas and live in their light? According to Coleridge, we all live in their power, but it is another thing to live in, and choose to be guided by, their light. For the mind centred on the fixities and definites of fancy's images and the understanding's concepts, facts exert a pressure that suppresses a desire for principles, and for such a mind, *is*s outweigh *ought*s by seeming to be the only real certainties. One problem such a mind overlooks, however, is how, without logically antecedent principles, certain facts are to be esteemed as more important than others. Nearing the end of his life, Coleridge reflects on how without the guidance of principles, the mind is dragged hither and thither by whatever nearest facts receive our attention:

> No one seems to have any distinct convictions—right or wrong; the mind is completely at sea—rolling and pitching on the waves of Facts and personal Experiences. . . . You say Facts give birth to, and are the ground of, Principles. But unless you have a Principle of selection, why did you take notice of those particular Facts. You must have a Lantern in your hand to give light; otherwise all the materials in the world are useless, for you can neither find them, and if you could, you could not arrange them.
>
> But *that* principle came from Facts!—To be sure: but there must have been antecedent Light again to see those antecedent Facts. The Relapse in imagination may be carried back for ever—but you can never imagine a man without a previous Aim or Principle.
>
> Then what do you say to Bacon's Induction? This—that it is not what is now a days so called, but which is in fact *De*duction only. (*Table Talk* I, 191-2)[113]

Not questioning one's own lights (i.e., the principles behind one's attentions, selections,

[113] He likely recalls a discussion with the young Benthamite MP, Thomas Hyde Villiers: see *Table Talk*, 191-2, n. 13.

and ascriptions of importance), and perhaps even denying their very existence in asserting that there are only facts and viewpoints, much like Democritean atoms and the void, is to place oneself unwittingly and obscurely in the sway of Ideas rather than to work in their lights. That is to say, it is to be swayed unconsciously while thinking one acts and observes freely. When guiding principles are unacknowledged or even denied, then one's every act and observation can be cited as freely made, which is partly true; however, the scope of that freedom is limited by the apparent possibilities illuminated by one's dominant principles.

Could we be mistaken in identifying the light of an Idea? After all, Coleridge holds Aristotle, the genius of the Understanding addressed for centuries as 'The Philosopher', to be a conceptualist unable to raise himself to the higher state of *noesis*. How could we tell if we had ever been, or failed to be, illuminated by an Idea?

Although many thinkers appeal to innate Ideas, Coleridge repudiates the doctrine. He considers Descartes' version, for example, to be:

> the fanciful hypothesis of material ideas, or certain configurations of the brain which were as so many moulds to the influxes of the external world. (*Biographia* I, 98)

Coleridge's objective realism, whereby Ideas are real and hence independent of human mind, divides his philosophy from Kant's idealism wherein a priori concepts of the understanding and Ideas of reason are held to be necessary elements of the experiencing mind, and not necessarily anything beyond that.

Coleridge does, however, agree that the mind is endowed with instincts and offices of Reason. Nevertheless, for him the mind moves towards Ideas beyond itself, which is very different from Kant's notion of Ideas originating in the mind, considering its objects as real only in the modes of faith and hope. With Kant, for whom Ideas regulate, and thus organize, human knowledge within the 'architectonic of Reason', Coleridge sees Ideas as necessary to bring:

> a unity into all our conceptions and several knowledges. On this all system depends; and without this we could reflect connectedly neither in nature nor on our own minds. (*Reflection*, 168)

Against Kant, however, he sees Ideas as having to be brought to mind, and not already there as merely mental entities.

Differing further from Kant, Coleridge insists that the unifying Idea is true, and not merely superimposed on experience for the convenient sake of architectonic system. Abstractions of thought, as much as perceptions and images, can obstruct the unifying

principle and must be surmounted to access Ideas. Ideas such as life, freedom and our deeper purposes resonate neither solely as objects given nor as impositions from our nature but 'as deep calling to deep in the self-evolution of truth' (Muirhead, 1930, 102).[114] This unity derives from mind and world's common ground: the *ens realissimum*. This most real being, equivalent to Plato's Idea of Ideas, grounds reality and Ideas in their unity and truth.

> The grand problem, the solution of which forms the final object and distinctive character of philosophy, is this: for all that exists conditionally (that is, the existence of which is inconceivable except under the conditions of its dependency on some other as its antecedent) to find a ground that is unconditioned and absolute, and thereby to reduce the aggregate of human knowledge to a system. (*Friend* I, 461)

For Coleridge, two truths make indisputable this ground's existence. Firstly, scientific inquiry seeks laws as the ground of phenomena. Secondly, we conceive of a 'ground common to the world and man', which forms 'the link or *mordant* by which philosophy becomes scientific and the sciences philosophical' (*Friend* I, 463). This ground accounts for the concord of reason and experience. This is the ground that Hume (*Enquiry*, VIII.i) declares inexistent, as if expecting the sun to rise, or a purse of gold left in Charing-Cross to fly away like a feather, were merely to infer from constant conjunction of similarly associated events, with the mind being merely 'determined by custom to infer the one appearance from the other'.

Kant, by contrast, defends this ground against Humean scepticism with the transcendental unity of apperception. If noumenal causes cannot be observed, then at least certain phenomena are necessarily unified in experience (and not just by constant conjunction, an accidental unity). Coleridge, however, does not try to demonstrate the unity of experience alone. As Hume argues, this ground accounting for the general agreement of reason and experience is not reachable by induction. Coleridge (*Biographia* I, 285) reasons that:

> Should we attempt it [i.e., to find a principle more fundamental than self-consciousness], we must be driven back from ground to ground, each of which would cease to be a Ground the moment we pressed on it. We must be whirl'd down the gulf of an infinite series. But this would make our make our reason baffle the end and purpose of all reason, namely, unity and system. Or we must break off the series arbitrarily, and affirm an absolute something that is . . . *causa sui*.[115]

We know of one causative thing that can assign purpose to itself, and we know it

[114] Alluding to *Psalms,* 42:7: 'Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls'.
[115] Clarification in square brackets mine. Coleridge notes here that self-consciousness is 'not a kind of *being*, but a kind of *knowing*'.

from the inside, because it is the will. Prioritising the will in consciousness, he thus approaches the Idea:

> It is at once the distinctive and constitutive basis of my philosophy that I place the ground and genesis of my system, not, as others, in a fact impressed, much less in a generalization from facts collectively, least of all in an abstraction embodied in an hypothesis, in which the pretended solution is most often but a repetition of the problem in disguise. In contradiction to this, I place my principle in an *act*. In the language of the grammarians, I begin with the verb—but the act involves its reality—it is the act of being (*Opus Maximum*, 72)

Coleridge's act is his human access to the Idea. The notion stands for contemplated counterparts of universal laws of nature and of moral laws. Law and Idea are inseparable:

> for as the power of seeing is to light, so is an idea in mind to a law in nature. They are correlatives that suppose each other. (*Lit. Lects* II, 148)

This Pythagorean resonance between physical laws and mental qualities harmonizes with Schelling's *Natürphilosophie*, the great theme of which is that:

> Mind is invisible Nature; Nature visible Mind. ([1797] 1988, Introduction)

As Coleridge expresses it, 'living and life-producing ideas . . . are essentially one with the germinal causes in nature', constituting the generative principles which they represent in the realm of awareness (*Lit. Lects* II, 222).

To contemplate Ideas is to be directed towards the reality by which all things are generated, transformed, and have their being and value. As poetic imagination symbolizes these generative ideal processes and values, it is thus 'an echo of . . . [creation], co-existing with the conscious will' (*Biographia* I, 304). Imagination is penetratingly insightful, while fancy is superficially observant. Imagination is directed towards the Ideas, or Laws, which give being, meaning, value, and purpose to phenomena. Fancy manipulates appearances and associations to produce gratifying effects rather than to contemplate intrinsic value.

Coleridge described artistic creation as parallel to natural or divine creation insofar as both develop from internal laws, or Ideas. The position derives from Plotinus, who Coleridge says provides:

> the statement in his most beautiful language of the only possible form of philosophic Realism and demonstrates its <conditional> necessity by one of the most masterly pieces of exhaustive Logic, found in ancient or modern Writings. . . . Let the attempt of Plotinus have ended in a failure—yet who could see the courage and skill with which he seizes the reins, and vaults into the Chariot of the Sun, with what elegance he curbs and turns the

> ethereal Steeds, without sharing in this enthusiasm—and taking honour to the human mind even to have fallen from such magnificent Daring? (*Marginalia* V, 745)

Coleridge defends Plotinus's principle that whatever is necessary to reality is necessarily real itself. This principle derives from the Lycopolean Roman ascetic's transcendental argument that the Forms are prerequisites of a universe in which experience and understanding are possible. [116] Coleridge describes the great Neo-Platonist as demonstrating that:

> a Knowledge by Ideas is a constant process of Involution and Evolution, different from the Conceptions of the Understanding in this respect only—that no reason can be brought for the Affirmation, because it *is* reason—ex. gr. that the Soul contemplate its Principle as the Universal in itself as a Particular, i.e. that this truth is *involved,* & vice versa, evolves itself from its principle (*Marginalia* V, 756)

Here we find the beauty of the poet-philosopher's quarry: the identity of act and object in the mode of contemplation, an act involving the reality of the Idea.[117] Coleridge's thought is seminal, in parts brilliantly insightful, but also and often frustratingly fragmentary.

[116] Plotinus: born Lycopolis, Lower Egypt, 204 CE; studies eleven years (from age twenty seven) under Ammonias Saccas, Alexandria; lives most of his life in Rome. In the two years between Alexandria and Rome, he joins Emperor Gordian III's Persia expedition, hoping to reach India and learn its philosophy and religion (Armstrong, 1936, notes coincidences between the *Enneads* and the *Upanishads*). See Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*: 'And from that day continually staying with Ammonius, [Plotinus] acquired such a mastery of philosophy, that he became eager to gain knowledge of the teaching prevailing among the Persians, as also among the Indians.'

[117] Conceiving the identity of subject and object in contemplation goes back at least to Aristotle (*De Anima*). For discussion, see Philip Merlan (1963).

3.9 Imaginative Contemplation in Aesthetic Experience

Coleridge's fancy-imagination distinction presents imaginative works as inviting contemplation of reality beyond the self, that is, of reality as objective. Coleridge's distinction therefore continues a long Platonic tradition that argues that genuine aesthetic experience necessarily involves contemplation.[118] This basically Neo-Platonic position reaches its apex with Schelling, who argues that our experience necessarily relates to transcendence, the fullest expression of which must be what I term aesthetic-ideal and praeter-conceptual. In Schelling's articulation, adopted from the early Romanticism of Friedrich Schegel and Novalis, whom he knew in Jena, that:

> Art is the only true and eternal document of Philosophy, which always and continuously documents what Philosophy cannot represent externally. ([1800] 1978, 231)

For Schelling, philosophy is an ultimately aesthetic endeavour that is part of nature's movement, as 'slumbering spirit', to become fully conscious. In this movement, imagination conveys by participating in:

> the primordial knowledge of which the visible universe is the image and whose source is the fountainhead of eternal power. ([1803] 1966, 11-12)

Contemplation in this tradition longs for and acknowledges the transcendent. In the final proposition of his *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein also acknowledges a contemplative response, which for him is a quiet beholding appropriate to an appreciated but ineffable value:

> Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.

That silence is not banal emptiness: it is quiet, pious even. The appropriate response to it involves standing back, giving space, perhaps even taking off one's shoes before the blackberry bush as in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's aesthetic-contemplative response in *Aurora Leigh*, Book VII:

> Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God;
> But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,
> The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries

Works of successful contemporary artists such as Tracy Emin, Chris Ofili, and Damien Hirst deal in concepts and sensation, in the equally insubstantial extremes of detritus and dazzle. Notions of transcendence and contemplation have no work to do here, partly because of the dominance of the concept in conceptual art. Is the contemplative model

[118] Cf. Scruton (2011, 34ff., and *passim*).

of aesthetic response adequate only to certain types of art and aesthetic experience? Or does conceptual art fail to provide a stable aesthetic dimension in the experience it creates? Purely conceptual art does not invite contemplation as it is intentionally conceptual, rather than praeter-conceptual. It is the intimation of the Idea that invites contemplation.

Merely conceptual artwork cannot be justified as presenting or stimulating any further significance than a plain propositional formulation, its main benefit being perhaps relative ease of communication or emphasis, rather than its being an artistically necessary mode of expression. An unusual visual presentation of the conceptual can nevertheless prompt reflection and stir meditation. Conceptual art can prompt one to reflect on the more usual conventions and whether those modes of formulation contain anything that especially deserves the privilege of being widely accepted. I take meditation to be a middle state between reflection (such as when conventions are reflexively questioned) and contemplation, a mode wherein a 'space apart' is reserved for beholding a value, an Idea. Meditation is the making still required to find contemplation beyond reflection. Meditation need not become contemplation, but its mental 'standing back' is always conducive to it.

McGhee (2000, 114) describes meditation as a 'site' to which Ideas may come, although they do not necessarily come, and it is not the only such site. Meditation brings:

> an alert attention, a suspension of normal life, followed by re-orienting ideas, then the process of protecting and sustaining this new mental formation, and then its outcome in action, fitful and in conflict at first, and finally without conflict.

McGhee's thesis is of the philosophical value of meditative and contemplative experience, and their aesthetic forms, owing to their potential in transforming the subjective states receptive to and operating on ethical and Ideal content.

Meditation 'stands back' in neither following, nor forcibly ceasing, the chatter of ordinary thoughts. Once these thought reflexes cease directing attention and mood, contemplation becomes possible. If contemplation is achieved, background thoughts dissolve. By contemplation, and the meditation that typically precedes it, I mean no elitist conception, but a mode accessible to any rational being. Coleridge even describes his four-and-a-half year old son Hartley's contemplation:

> I had a very long conversation with Hartley about Life, Reality, Pictures, & Thinking, this evening. He sate on my knee for half an hour at least, & was exceedingly serious. . . . I

> asked him what he did when he thought of any thing—he answered—I look at it, and then go to sleep. To sleep?—said I—you mean, that you *shut your eyes*. Yes, he replied—I shut my eyes . . . and go to sleep—then I WAKE again, and away I run. (*Letters* II, 379, to Dorothy Wordsworth, 9th February, 1801

Coleridge then reflects that:

> the notion of that state of mind being Sleep is very striking, & he meant more, I suspect, than that People when asleep have their eyes shut—indeed I know it from the tone & leap up of Voice with which he uttered the word 'WAKE'.

Young Hartley first sits calmly on his father's knee, and is thus able to reflect when asked to describe not his thoughts, but his thinking. The child's answer contrasts contemplation, likened to sleep, with ordinary consciousness, when he 'wakes' again, and away he runs! He draws from the well in silence, drinks in, is refreshed, and then, enriched, vigorously returns to his energetic play.

Contemplation, then, enriches everyday aesthetic experience. It can be momentary or prolonged. It always, however, beholds value for its own sake. It involves 'seeing' something, and 'seeing' that it is good.

This contemplation does not require cultural allusions to be understood, unlike, e.g., Eliot's *The Waste Land*, which requires wide reading in a long history of English Literature, Vedic scriptures, some German references, etc. Neither does contemplation require special conceptual recognition, unlike much conceptual art, or, for example, the phantasmagoria of Hieronymus Bosch. Concepts in aesthetic experience can bring the mind to historical and empirical meanings, and can lead one to consider facts and possibilities. Concepts are only deepened and enriched, however, with aesthetic Ideas, which provide resonance and depth inaccessible by concepts alone.

Moreover, contemplation requires no conceptual manipulation or sophistication. Consider a child talking with a trusted adult. The understanding is conceptually engaged as the child frames questions and assimilates answers. But it is in the moments following the conceptualizing that contemplative appreciation occurs. Signs of this might be a gentle smile, the head tilted as if to parallel an inner, attentive listening. The legs and arms do not twist and strain, nor the fingers fidget, as when thought physically analogizes the body to act out complex conceptual links; instead, the contemplative's body becomes still, yet more poised and alert than simply relaxed.

Such momentary, everyday contemplation is not, however, prolonged in everyday experience. Yet the shared silence in smiles after a long journey, for example, maintains an environment of real value and not just of instrumental goals. The contemplative

response to art gives form and cultivates conventions for the shared acknowledgement of essential qualities and universal values. That the value is beheld in the appreciative, transformative beholding, and not in the conceptuality and externality of action itself, is clearly yet delicately expressed in Armitage's 'It Ain't What You Do, It's What It Does To You' (1989). The poet describes a contemplative experience far from the impressive setting of a Moghul mausoleum, or the conventions of high art, or established religion. Far from being elitist, or even showy, Armitage's contemplative encounter occurs along the muddy banks of a Lancashire reservoir:

> I have not padded through the Taj Mahal,
> barefoot, listening to the space between
> each footfall picking up and putting down
> its print against the marble floor. But I
>
> skimmed flat stones across Black Moss on a day
> so still I could hear each set of ripples
> as they crossed. I felt each stone's inertia
> spend itself against the water; then sink.

This contemplative experience is hallmarked by appreciative attention; a pausing of worldly concerns and extraneous thoughts; and the sense of beholding. Contemplation beholds value in what is encountered, and thus reveres its objects. One is enrapt in the value beheld and tranquillity replaces extraneous thought. Engaged, tasked activity directs the streams of superfluous associations, which in meditation are neither followed nor forcibly blocked; and in contemplation they cease to appear.

Part Four. Meditative Experience: Imagination and Idea in Poetic Thought

> [A]ll men are poets in their way, tho' for the most part their ways are *damned bad ones*. (*Letters* II, p. 768, to Southey, 1801)

4.1 Imaginative, Meditative, and Contemplative Thinking

An appreciation of Philosophy's vital, life-changing core is reflected in C. S. Lewis's memoir (1998, 225), where he recalls referring to Philosophy as a 'subject' to his friend Barfield. 'It wasn't a *subject* to Plato!' replied Barfield, 'It was a way.' In Coleridge too, we see the importance of meditative thinking and spiritual transformation as a way towards the true, the good, and the beautiful. Part Four will develop my view of contemplation arising from meditative experience. To this aim, I select from Coleridge's meditative poetry (see Appendix B); from some more overtly philosophical remarks in his nature writing; and from some exquisitely beautiful and reflective aesthetic observations in his Notebooks, the latest of which remained unpublished until 2002.[119]

Regarding my use of the terms 'meditation' and 'contemplation', the former refers to a state prior to contemplation that can involve reverie, flights of fancy, mindfulness, and heightened awareness. Although not in principle excluded from my use, I do not mean by *meditation* a discipline of emptying the mind, as in yoga practice, nor do I mean the cognitively processing, intellectual problem-solving found in Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, or Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*, although what I mean by *meditation* is not necessarily excluded from such activities. More positively, then, by *meditation* I will generally refer to an *attending to* . . . and a *listening to* . . . .

On the theme of attentive 'listening', Japanese culture has a tradition of incense appreciation whereby practitioners are said to 'listen to' (verb: *kiku*) incense. This tradition developed from Zen and its counterpart Chinese traditions through many generations of *kōdō* (lit. the Way of Incense) practitioners, although only a few hundred now actively practice to a level where they can name up to several hundred scents. During the incense ceremony, the participants submit their answers while 'listening to' different incenses, and these responses are submitted in the poetic form of *haiku*, thus furthering meditative attention. This discernful 'listening' demands the highest level of aesthetic concentration, especially because once the ceremony is underway, a smoky

[119] Because Coleridge kept so many Notebooks through his life, some of which he returned to after many years, sometimes even writing in them upside down, with difficult handwriting, etc., these invaluable, highly creative (though sometimes mundane as any diary) document took such a long time to be published.

haze of intermingling scents fills the room. Understanding the sense of 'listening to . . .' in this aesthetic-meditative practice should help introduce the discernful or mindful listening I will discuss in the present chapter.

Coleridge twice warns against the 'despotism of the eye' whereby visual first impressions too often lead to uncorrected prejudices preventing genuine attention and careful reflection. Indeed, he remarks that 'Pythagoras, with his numeral, and Plato, with his musical, symbols' show how we may be liberated from this despotism in favour of attending to the invisible essences of mathematics and music (*Biographia* I, 74). In this sense, music can be appreciated as the most purely intellectual of the arts, in the sense that the movement and patterns of spirit become in music the spirit's own objects.[120] Form becomes all and content reduces to a bare minimum. In instrumental music, content ideally disappears altogether, except for very general and imaginative suggestions. That is to say, there is a formal suggestion of content as an Ideal and highly general, universal object, and this accounts for the widespread resonance of much music that is able to cross borders that academic treatises, for example (and which are not purely intellectual in the sense I mean), cannot.

There is, nevertheless, a sense of more fully seeing that develops through technical training and artistic practice. Think, for example, of Claude Monet's exquisitely observed 1892-94 series of paintings superbly depicting the coloured light illuminating Rouen Cathedral's west façade, from which series he selected twenty that he considered to be complete and perfect. Heightened emotional engagement, and not only talent, training and practice, will also awaken discernful seeing and a degree of poetic sensibility, as when young love stirs Romeo to see in his beloved Juliet the radiant and world-sustaining qualities of the sun:

> But soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
> It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
> (*Romeo and Juliet*, II.ii.2-3)

Discernful listening, however, is more generally available to most hearing people, and this is reflected in the way words like 'hark', 'harken', 'hush', and 'listen' are or have been used. Discernful listening symbolizes a sublime contemplative sense in Joyce's 'The Dead' (1914), which short story observes the exterior traces of an established married couple's interior lives. Gabriel, the husband, speaks, and indeed has

[120] See Hamilton (Ch. 1, 2007) for discussion of how music is nevertheless not intellectual in the sense of music being non-discursive and non-thetic.

prepared an after-dinner speech. Nevertheless, despite his educated facility with words, he is always embarrassedly aware of being forced and pretentious. The wife, Gretta, on the other hand, is described as *listening*. She feels nostalgic at this Feast of the Epiphany party when she listens to a man sing a traditional Irish ballad about a young man searching for his beloved. She harkens to thoughts of a boy who loved her but died when seeking for her in the snow despite being already sick. When Gabriel observes his wife listening to music coming from the drawing room, he finds:

> grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of.

I will use the word 'meditation', then, in the context of attending to and listening to, and not to refer to an emptying of mind, such as often emphasized in the *dhyāna* (meditative) practice of Buddhist traditions, although my sense is conspecific with the absorptive meditative states that those traditions also practice and describe.[121] *Meditation*, in this chapter, will therefore refer to states of concentration or absorption, but usually not to what Griffiths (1986) calls enstatic. Griffiths identifies two basic forms of meditation that co-exist in Buddhist traditions: the analytic and the enstatic. He presents the contrast in saying that:

> analytical meditations are designed to remove standard cognitive and perceptual habit-patterns and . . . teach the practitioner something new about the way things are . . . . In contrast, the enstatic meditations are designed to reduce the contents of consciousness, to focus awareness upon a single point and ultimately to bring all mental activity to a halt. (Griffiths, 1986,13)

To Coleridge's meditative, sometimes intensely mindful, listening for the heart of the matter during his wholly engaged walks through often-difficult natural terrain we may find promising parallels in Daoism and the Zen Buddhism which evolved from the encounter of Buddhist *dhyāna* practice with religious and philosophical Daoism. These parallels are exciting insights; nonetheless, after arguing for their existence, I will provide reasons for taking care not to become carried away by the aesthetic-meditative experience of flow.

[121] The Chinese word *ch'an* derives from *dhyāna*: 'meditation'. *Zen* (Japanese) derives from *ch'an*, after Buddhism's adoption in Japan, after scholar-monks, such as S*ōtō Zen founder* D*ō*gen, reyirned from Chinese monasteries. D*ō*gen's favoured *zazen* means 'sitting meditation', and *ritsuzen* means 'standing meditation'. Both involve focused activity, e.g. *kyūdo* (archery), emphasizing concentration and mindfulness in listening, seeing, breathing, and posture. For D*ō*gen, meditative practice expresses Buddha nature, in which all beings participate. Paraphrasing Coleridge, a S*ōtō Zen* Buddhist might say that enlightenment works in all beings, but only few work in its light.

Dhyāna is a Sanskrit word meaning 'to ponder, consider, think closely about'. In Buddhism, any discursive sense of the word is dropped. It thereby connotes an altered state moving towards a mindfulness or retention (*smṛti*: undistracted awareness, especially of the present moment, also connoting a sense of memory, as in holding onto discerned truths) developing from concentration (*samādhi*).[122] In this sense, then, *dhyāna* is discerned by impartiality and equanimity (*upekkha*); it gently, mindfully retains without obtrusion or prejudice. As such, through *dhyāna* one is freed from all of those obstacles that stand in the way of extending sympathy (*karuṇā*), compassion (*maitri*: loving kindness, or benevolence), and joy at another's happiness (*mudita*) from one's mother, friends and so on to all beings. Hence the traditional exercises in meditation where one is supposed to contemplate that one's worst enemy was, in a previous life, one's mother.[123]

We need not be surprised, therefore, at similarities between the Buddhist's meditative notion of compassion for all living beings,[124] and the Coleridgean shared joy and cosmic love of 'the one Life within us and abroad', aglow in finding 'Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where–' ('The Eolian Harp', l. 30, *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817). As we read in 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' (1797), Coleridge considers that:

> 'Tis well to be bereft of promis'd good,
> That we may lift the soul, and contemplate
> With lively joy the joys we cannot share.

From the *dhyāna* perspective we now consider, this kind of joy in which we contemplate another's feeling, and in which Coleridge contemplates friend and fellow poet Charles Lamb's joy, is indeed shared. Because, however, it is not the sharing of side-by-side participation, he says he contemplates 'With lively joy the joys we cannot share'. Nevertheless, the selfless joy he describes is shared because it is joy in another's joy, felt for the other's sake, and is thus, like a joyful counterpart to pity, inherently unselfish. Coleridge continues,

> My gentle-hearted Charles! when the last rook

[122] See Griffiths, 1995, 37. I use Sanskrit terms unless stating otherwise.
[123] Deriving from Yogācāra (emphasizing meditation and yogic practice) founder Asaṅga's Teaching of Great Compassion: 'This one toward whom I feel hostile has been reborn as my mother countless times and has cared for me with love. Which one should I like? Which one should I hate? I will feel equanimity and free myself from attachment and aversion. Lamas and gods, please enable me to do this!' Wangyal, 1978, 137.
[124] The reader may note a convergence with Heidegger's favourite Pietist saying that *denken ist danken*, to think is to thank. 'What is Metaphysics?', and 'What Calls For Thinking?', Heidegger, [1929, 1943] 1999, 89-110; [1954] 1999, 365-92.

Beat its straight path along the dusky air
Homewards, I blest it! deeming its black wing
(Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light)
Had cross'd the mighty Orb's dilated glory,
While thou stood'st gazing; or, when all was still,
Flew creeking o'er thy head, and had a charm
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom
No sound is dissonant which tells of Life.

Blessing the rook is a benevolent act performed for his friend's sake. Here is joy in another's joy, especially considering Lamb's pain since his sister, in an insane fit, slew their mother and was committed to an asylum.

The poem is implicitly confident that his friend will feel the joy he knows to be justified because the experience of the walk is so great. From the blessing of the rook, which is neither a typical emblem nor object of affection, we trace the very similar and perhaps more powerful blessing pivotal in 'The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere' (1797-8). The Mariner's momentous blessing of the water-snakes is a gracious mental act that wins his salvation and reverses his curse incurred by wounding nature's good omen, the Albatross:

O happy living things! no tongue
  Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gusht from my heart,
  And I bless'd them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
  And I bless'd them unaware.

The selfsame moment I could pray;
  And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
  Like lead into the sea.
(*Poetical Works* I.1, 393-4, ll. 282-291)

The Mariner's salvation is born of this spontaneous, meditative prayer of blessing: an act of effusive shared joy and sympathy, and no self-interested petition, despite his burden and suffering. The act of pure benevolence releases him, and is the first act of a new, second nature. From our first nature, we express without reflection pain and pleasure, disgust and mirth. These expressions are pre-reflective and require no explanation. The spiritual conversion is a turning to the good through contemplation born of long meditation, often instigated by long suffering and remorse. This turning initiates a second nature awakening reason and its universality not wholly or even mainly through intellectual reflection, but through a much more biographical, living

path. This second nature, although open to reflection, is not itself necessarily, or even best, born of conceptual reflection, reminding one of St Paul's dark notice that:

> God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. (Corinthians, 1:27)

And St Luke's gospel recounts that:

> Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, and He said, 'O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike'. (Luke 10:21; cf. Matthew 11:25)

Accordingly, the Ancient Mariner's access to contemplation, joy, and conversion comes through a non-intellectual though spiritual act. His blessing the water-snakes, the 'slimy things' that 'crawl with legs / Upon the slimy sea', is a turning point initiating his new, or second, nature, a spiritual, moral conversion whose expressions include universal sympathy, appreciation, contemplation, shared joy, and blessing. The blessing is a spontaneous, spiritual act so far from being reflectively intellectual that the Mariner says:

> A spring of love gusht from my heart,
> And I bless'd them unaware
> (Part Four, penultimate stanza)

The expressions of this converted nature gather a meaning deeper than our first nature can understand or even feel, and its responses aim not at sensation, appetite, and survival, but at the goodness, rightness, and beauty of virtues and truths.

Speaking of a matured human nature, then, Wordsworth can say that such profound thoughts lie too deep for tears.

> Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
> Thanks to its tenderness, its joys and fears,
> To me the meanest flower that blows can give,
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.
> (Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood, final lines)

Wordsworth's long ode begins singing the memory of joy in childhood, when everything seemed lovely, as if dressed in heavenly light. He is now a man, and cannot see things in the same way. Nevertheless, he imagines a truth expressed in Plato's myth of the soul's birth from outside space and time into its human body. While childhood's brighter colours and the pleasure in simple perceptions fade, and although eternal moments wane and ordinary time waxes, he accepts that the happy childhood vision is replaced, if one retains hope and natural piety in patient maturity.

The child's first nature is aware of life's strong colours and feelings and perhaps helps create them. The adult, however, is more aware of death, and feels for intimations of its meaning, which meaning would, being beyond life, illuminate it. Thoughts of death and suffering, too deep for tears, thus give deeper meaning to the sunset's dark colours, and to symbols of fragility. And if the child's powerful, shining emotions cannot be revisited, they might nonetheless be replaced with a depth of compassion and thought.

On hearing the recital of another long poem of Wordsworth's, the 'Poem (title not yet fixed upon) to Coleridge' (posthumously titled 'The Prelude' by Mary Wordsworth in 1850), Coleridge responded, composing through the night, with his 'Poem to a Gentleman', which then becomes 'To William Wordsworth'. Listening to his friend recite the philosophical poem whose inspiration he provided, Coleridge enters unawares into a deep contemplation that succeeds a gradual meditation. He can therefore say,

> And when I rose, I found myself in prayer.

This contemplative state is unselfconscious. One often enters it unawares, rapt in silent attention to an Ideal object, from which state one may act with pure compassion and shared joy. This charity born of contemplation is neither the elitist notion of an intelligentsia, nor the easy sentimentality of popular truisms. Its sensual access is possible through the prolonged stillness of forbearance or remorse, and it is thereby intimately related to virtue and the experience of grace. Its intellectual access lies in concentrating on ultimate ends, and thus preoccupation with conceptual clarity, distinction-making, and conventional rule-following *for their own sakes* is likely to prevent such contemplation.

The contemplation and related spiritual states I describe are not merely a creative invention of various Western cultural, religious, and philosophical traditions, they can also be found, *mutatis mutandis*, in those Indic traditions remarkable for their attention, concentration, and insight into attention, concentration, and insight themselves, and for their philosophical aim towards wisdom as a kind of higher 'vision' that develops from insight. The 'one Life' experience is, unsurprisingly then, but remarkably, also found in, for example, Therevada Buddhists' adherence to the four states of contemplation (*karuṇā* (compassion), *maître* (loving kindness), *muditā* (sympathetic joy), and *upekṣā* (equanimity)) known as the four divine abodes (*brahma-vihāra*). These states are cultivated through meditative practice and result in divine contemplation. They are

considered divine because attaining to any one of these states is to be, even if momentarily, how the gods always are. Thus the Buddha says,

> He keeps pervading the first direction—as well as the second direction, the third, and the fourth—with an awareness imbued with compassion. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with compassion: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will. (Digha Nikaya 13 – Pali: 'long discourse' – the Tejiva Sutta – Pali: 'the discourse on the eel-wrigglers, or the sly equivocators' – the Buddha [c.500 BC], trans. Walshe, 1987)

Remaining only with their shared objects of attention, and not with contingent genealogical differences, we may consider meditative Buddhists and Coleridge as sharing an experience of an especially concentrated state of mind, which Buddhist traditions calls *samādhi* (concentration, holding together), whence insight (*vipaśyanā*),[125] and thence wisdom (*prajñā*: higher knowledge) may arise. This raises the question of Coleridge's awareness of Eastern wisdom traditions, and the answer is it was quite extensive for his time. We know, for example, that he read Sir Charles Wilkins' translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* (1785); and that he made many notes on Abbé Dubois' *Description of the Character, Manners and Customs of the People of India*.[126] For an in-depth study of Coleridge's Eastern sources, see Riem Natale (2005).

Etymologically, *prajña* is formed from *superior* and *knowledge* (*jñāna*: cognate with Gk. *gnosis*). In early Buddhism *prajña* refers to knowledge of essentials such as impermanence, not-self, and suffering. Such wisdom is not merely propositional knowledge, and is thus no mere assent to certain truths, but rather requires being deeply affected, much as Coleridge aims at 'the union of deep feeling with profound thought' (*Biographia* I, 80). As Coleridge writes:

> To perceive . . . and to assent . . . as to an abstract proposition—is easy—but it requires the most wakeful attentions of the most reflective minds in all moments to bring it into practice—it is enough that we have once swallowed it (*Letters* I, 115, to Southey, October 1794)

Prajñā is noetic in that it is a collected insight into the nature of things. As such, it may bring about *bodhi* (enlightenment), equivalent to praeter-conceptual *noesis*, Plato's ultimate contemplative knowledge to which all goodness returns. Indeed Plotinus implies that the truly good never essentially leaves its source, when he describes the

[125] In ed.Yoshinori, 1995, 37, Griffiths describes *samādhi* as: 'a preliminary practice, one that would act as an appropriate propadeutic for *vipaśyanā-bhāvanā,* "the cultivation of insight"'.
[126] See *Marginalia* under DUBOIS for Coleridge's notes on this text.

soul's highest level as the undescended part through which one returns to the post-contemplative union that he calls *henôsis*, or return to the divine One.[127] This calm, shimmeringly beautiful, non-discursive realization of original union unites the contemplative and the contemplated, and I think we do not go too far to imagine Coleridge approaching such union when:

> Scarce conscious, and yet conscious of its close
> I sate, my being blended in one thought
> (Thought was it? or aspiration? or resolve?)
> Absorbed, yet hanging still upon the sound—
> And when I rose, I found myself in prayer.
> (*Poetical Works* I.1, 815-6, 'To William Wordsworth')

And again, when in the very Zen-like image with which 'Frost at Midnight' closes, he imagines the snow-water on his cottage roof:

> . . . whether the eave-drops fall
> Heard only in the trances of the blast,
> Or if the secret ministry of frost
> Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
> Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

The contemplative state at the end of 'To William Wordsworth' suggests *śamatha*:

> Absorbed, yet hanging still upon the sound—
> And when I rose I found myself in prayer

And in 'Frost at Midnight', the 'icicles / Quietly shining to the quiet moon' suggest peacefully resonant *samādhi. Śamatha* is calm meditation that enables concentration (*samādhi*) by annulling distractedness. When untempered by *śamatha* (calming) meditation, and before reaching the contemplative stillness described above, Coleridge often observed in himself a 'stretched and anxious state' familiar to any whose thoughts and impressions race, flood, and circumvolve, while, literally or metaphorically hiking strikingly beautiful and demanding terrain.

In this chapter, meditative experience can refer to (a) what happens when one 'does meditation'; it can also refer to (b) savouring a sensation; (c) calm observation, such as before a waterfall, lake, or other vista, Coleridge describes this kind of meditative experience as one in which the mind is 'off the stretch' (*Notebooks* 1, 1489); (d) reverie, which sometimes emerges from the latter two states, and which Locke described as 'when *ideas* float in our mind, without any reflection or regard of the understanding, it

[127] Basu finds in Platonic *noesis* and Plotinian *henôsis* 'a way of life, what in India is called *sadhana*, a way leading the philosopher to a vision of, and union with what he calls The One' (ed. Gregorios, 2002, 153).

is that which the French call *rêverie* (our language has scarce a name for it)' (*Essay*, II.XIX);[128] (e) a 'stretched and anxious state' full of significant observations and always on the verge of discovery (this state would not be meditative in Buddhist or Christian parlance, but I include it in my nuanced notion of meditation as a state preparatory to, though not inevitably leading to, contemplation); and, synoptically, (f) the meditative moment, deriving from any one of the former, that recovers the mental silence required for contemplation.

Meditative experience, then, can lead to reverie; be worked into a concentrated attentiveness; or can develop into contemplation. As indicated in (e) above, my notion of meditation connotes a state preparatory to, but not entailing, contemplation. The observant stretched and anxious state eddies with thoughts, is intensely flowing and invigorating, and is meditative in the old sense of being rich in thought as well as in the technical sense of this part of my thesis, i.e. the sense of being preparatory to contemplation, despite being quite far from the calm sense of meditation in *zazen* or *ritsuzen*. Coleridge describes this state in a letter to Thomas Wedgwood:

> I never find myself alone within the embracement of rocks & hills, a traveller up an alpine road, but my spirit courses, drives, and eddies, like a Leaf in Autumn: a wild activity, of thoughts, imaginations, feelings, and impulses of motion, rises up from within me—a sort of bottom-wind, that blows to no point of the compass, & comes from I know not whence, but agitates the whole of me; my whole Being is filled with waves . . . that roll & stumble, one this way, & one that way, like things that have no common master. (*Letters* II, 484, to Thomas Wedgwood, January 14, 1803)

Although meditation need not lead to contemplation, contemplation cannot be commenced without some kind of preparatory meditation. In this understanding, I echo Huxley's theory that humans need, at least psychologically, to prepare for contemplation with an antecedent procedure ([1945] 2009, 219). For him, as for the contemplative Church Doctors such as Aquinas, those antecedent procedures required for contemplation, but not guaranteeing its attainment, are the three modes of prayer: petition, intercession, and adoration, beyond which contemplation is the fourth and highest mode.

Contemplation aims at the Idea, and is therefore praeter-conceptual. One might return from contemplation and hazard a conceptual explication, but the contemplation itself will not involve refining concepts, which analytical activity is necessarily *post hoc*, or done afterwards, whereas contemplation is always *in media ideas*, or in the

[128] By *ideas*, Locke means *sensations* and *recollections*, and not Plato's very different *Ideas*.

midst of Ideas. While analytical activity has its important role of service within the contemplative life, it is necessarily not the end. As Plotinus says, knowledge, him is ultimately noetic contemplation and an end in itself, and is therefore not:

> made up of theorems and a collection of proportions [or propositions]; but this is not true even of the sciences here below. (*Ennead* V, 8.4.49-52)

The sense of contemplation I use is that of the *con-templum*, the space, cultural or psychological, reserved for beholding and appreciating. Here one imaginatively and yearningly approaches and contemplates Ideas in what Plotinus calls Intellect (*Noûs*). Contemplation has its positive and Ideal objects, and it is a beholding and an approach, and is thus not an emptying of mind. Because of this positive, intellectually active aspect of contemplation, which at the same time combines imaginatively with the passivity of intuiting the truths and Ideas of reason, Coleridge notes:

> One excellence of the Doctrine of Plato, or . . . Plotino-platonic philosophy, is that it never suffers, [or] causes . . . its Disciples to forget themselves, lost and scattered . . . and . . . instead of lulling the soul into an indolence of mere attention . . . rouses it to acts and energies of creative Thought, & Recognition–of conscious reproduction of states of Being. (*Notebooks* 3, 3935)

Contemplation requires a special sense of place and time cut off from the ordinary. Examples of this contemplative space and time can be found in a museum; a gallery; a stage-production; a temple; a makeshift altar; closed eyes and slowed breath in prayer; and contemplative moments in daily secular life might can be found with a chair set aside, dimmed lights, and reduced noise for listening to music, reading a novel, or savouring a drink while appreciating the good or the beautiful even here, through qualities held in mind. Appreciating art, for example, requires a contemplative space, without extraneous noise and sensation, and the expectation of a devoted period in which everyday duties and concerns are quietened. Hence classical music and jazz is artistically devalued when played as background music. The contemplated can only be approached and beheld in the *con-templum*'s unhurried time and space.

This experience, whether of an exhibition, performance, or worship, occurs in time and space, yet accrues an extraordinary transcendence so that the times and places of contemplation transform our experience of time and space. This special atmosphere is no quality of the spatio-temporal world, but is a quality lent to worldly objects in the imagination's aesthetically expressive symbolism of the Ideal. Thus contemplative art enriches and augments the everyday world.

By contemplation, then, I refer to an intellectual and aesthetic state progressing from meditative experience, and in which value is beheld. In this connection we can understand the saying attributed to St Nicholas Cabasilas, Byzantine mystic and theologian, that:

> Among all visible creatures, human nature can truly be an altar. (Cited in Murray, 2001, referring to an Yves Congar talk citing Cabasilas)

We may read Coleridge as a prototypical phenomenologist, sensitive to the significance in our lives of even the most seemingly unremarkable experiences.[129] Heidegger scholar and translator Krell (1990, 84-5) reads Coleridge as, 'one of the grandparents of contemporary phenomenological and "humanistic" psychological critiques'. Coleridge's phenomenological awareness harmonizes with his theory of symbolic imagination, previously discussed. His symbol is consubstantial with its universal, rather than metaphorizing it, and it can thereby occasion aesthetic contemplation, i.e. an aesthetic, non-conceptual appreciation of the kind Smith (1986) later describes as the felt meanings of the world.[130]

Coleridge and Sartre have an especial talent for communicating what our normally taken-for-granted desires and tastes reveal about our relationship to the world. Our desires and preferences are very often unreflective aesthetic states that are intentional but unexamined. On this theme, Coleridge finds in unreflective or hasty desire a demeaning identification with the object desired. He explains that:

> All actions . . . which proceed directly from the individual without reflection, as those of a hungry beast rushing to its food, all those in which the volition acts singly and immediately towards the object to be appropriated, may be classified as selfish but have no pretence to the name Self-love. (*Opus Maximum*, 30)

Presumably they have no pretence to the name self-love because pre-reflective consciousness is never its own object, so it can be selfishly appropriative while it lacks the reflexivity needed for self-love. Coleridge continues:

> Or as far as any reflection is supposed, or as far as the simple perception of the object is taken as a substitute for reflection, we ought to say that the food in the trough is the temporary *self* of the hog, i.e. it is that form with which the volition, the thoughts, and the sensations of the animal are united without any intermediate. (*Opus Maximum*, 30-1)

[129] Warnock, as we shall see, indicates an analogy between Coleridge and Sartre.
[130] Smith develops a Schelerian phenomenological metaphysics of appreciation and 'importances'.

Without proper reflection, desire confronts its object as something to be appropriated to materially augment the self. Indeed, the object becomes, in this remarkable thought, 'the temporary *self*' uniting will, thoughts, and sensations 'without any intermediate'.[131] In this chapter we will consider further observations by Coleridge that suggest him to be a subtly discerning phenomenologist of both things and of thinking. In this, his method is to direct our attention to the 'mind's self-experience in the act of thinking' (*Biographia* I, 124). These phenomenological, self-reflective meta-observations reach conclusions very close to Sartre's, and both discover in pre-reflective consciousness no self, or ego, but only the external object appearing solely in its desired (or feared) aspect or interpretation. Thus for Sartre:

> When I run after a streetcar, when I look at the time, when I am absorbed in contemplating a portrait, there is no I. There is consciousness *of the streetcar-having-to-be-caught*, etc., and non-positional consciousness of that consciousness. ([1936] 1999, 48-9, transl. adjusted)

Returning to our examination of unreflective-upon desires and preferences, I argue that taste and feeling ought to be supplemented with reflection, otherwise one simply wallows in feeling without principle. The need for aesthetic education should not, however, detract from the important insight that our tastes, preferences, and desires connect with initiative Ideas conatively felt in our lives. That is to say, Idea running through the *aisthesis* of taste and preference can educate and lead to one's becoming principled through later reflection on the Ideal in the experience. This reflection is assisted by concepts of the understanding that formulate rules to comprehend the experiences. The understanding gains, indeed it becomes enlightened, in its relations with the depth and timelessness of Ideal value intimated by these half-blind aesthetic experiences as utterly yet inexplicably meaningful.

A danger of imbalance lies in aesthetic states such as desire and seemingly harmless preferences, and I ally the need to correct this with McGhee's requirement that immediate feeling ought to become reflective. Coleridge develops Friedrich Schiller's notion of aesthetic education into the need to unite reason, imagination, and understanding in the principle. In the principle, Ideas of reason guide aesthetic sensibilities, and the understanding then uses conceptual reflection to aim towards

[131] Similarly, in Hegelian self-certainty, animals 'do not just stand idly in front of sensuous things as if these possessed intrinsic being, but, despairing of their reality, and completely assured of their nothingness, they fall to without ceremony and eat them up', Hegel, [1807] 1977, 65.

universal, rule-bound application. Thus Ideas stimulate our tastes and preferences, but in ways that are wholly unreflective, non-rule-bound, and thus seemingly irrational and irregular. This irregular application usually leads to what McGhee refers to as the bias towards the near, such that charity is reserved for those closest to home, despite the Idea initiating the sentiment calling for universal application.[132]

From these considerations of aesthetic education, I move to a broadly Coleridgean speculation on the art of living as a poetic endeavour. However well or ill achieved, the art of living involves the development of principles, the contemplation of Ideas, and the appreciation of values. No human life is untouched by principles and ideals misapplied and betrayed. Each life is an attempt – however damned bad it may be – to apply rhyme and reason in relating appetite and ideal; repetition and innovation; spontaneous feeling and regular principle. Bringing reflective understanding to Ideas only obscurely acknowledged in mood, aesthetic response, and moral feeling can therefore help achieve the Coleridgean ideal of possessing Ideas rather than being possessed by them.

The possession of Ideas consists in possessing principles. Thus sense, understanding, imagination, and reason unite in an ideal authenticity that nourishes living practices, enjoyments, goals and relationships by practical connection to ideal aims. Principles not only individuate one by uniting faculties and abilities, concerns, duties, and enjoyments, they also orient one such that an Idea 'turns the mind (or soul)', to use Plato's powerful conception of education (*Republic*, 479-531). Principle becomes second nature, not in Aristotle's sense of habit born of repetition, but in the sense of conversion, a turning or transformation from *sarcos phronēma* (the mind of the flesh, Romans 8:7), and from the conceptual, mechanical understanding, to the enlightenment that universal reason provides.

Now that we have discussed imaginative, meditative, and contemplative thinking, we should outline in brief an important asymmetry between the transition from meditation to contemplation, and that from association to imagination.

Both meditation and free-associative practice can generate material for creative expression, as well as be enjoyed for their own sakes. Nevertheless, while both processes are generative, I argue that of the two, only meditative experience is genuinely creative, and that associative techniques can only be creative when used in

[132] This is not Derek Parfit's (1984) 'bias towards the near', i.e. the putatively irrationally greater concern about one's nearer future than distant.

the service of a meditative, imaginative approach. Meditative practice involves an aesthetic wealth that overflows the conceptual and can lead to contemplation, whereas association never transcends the concept, being entirely governed by conceptually associative relations of contiguity, opposition, and so on.

It is well known that artists, especially expressionists, have used methods and techniques of association to stimulate their creativity in generating new connections, directions, and relations in their material. Gertrude Stein, for example, finds inspiration in the automatic writing of the surrealists. James Joyce explores stream of consciousness, taking cues from William James and Sigmund Freud. Indeed, Freud's theory and practice of free association has had an inestimable impact on literature and the arts in general.

Although techniques of association are formidable content generators, they can only be a preparatory for artistic creation. Genuine meditative experience stands quite apart from association, which, in the Coleridgean system, operates on the fixities and definites of the empirical concepts, and on the counters of fancy. Thus,

> Ideas *never* recall Ideas, as far as they are Ideas, any more than leaves in a forest create each other's motion. The breeze it is that runs through them—it is the Soul, the state of feeling. (*Letters* II, to Southey, August 7, 1803)

And so Coleridge opposes the temptation to conform our understanding of genuinely creative activity, and considered thought in general, to associationist hypotheses. The soul, the state of feeling, is like a breeze that stirs Ideas in thought. In this view, Ideas do not concatenate associatively, they are awakened or summoned by correspondent states of feeling. The aesthetic mood seeks its counterpart in the Ideas of reason, a role that concepts and fixed images cannot fulfil.

In streams of association, fancy is busy with contiguous links of continuity, opposition, and so on, accumulating a swell of images and connections. Such associative activity can commence meditation by providing material and a wide background. However, fancy and association must be left behind if meditation is to deepen, and then continue into contemplation. The busy circuitry of association involves a picking up and putting down of anything and everything fancied. Association is thus incompatible with the prolonged appreciation and beholding of contemplation.

Concepts of the understanding and images of fancy lack the vitality to resonate with 'the Soul, the state of feeling'. Thus the experience is referred to Ideas of reason, as occurs in Kant's description of genius using aesthetic Ideas to harmonize with the

unconceptualizable ‘much thought’ that follow intimations of the sublime and the beautiful. Aesthetic Ideas strain after Ideas of reason, and thus transcend expression in determinate concepts. As Kant puts it, aesthetic Ideas are approaches to Ideas of reason that the poet tries to ‘make sensible’ (*CJ*, §49). When aesthetic Ideas are not quite Ideas of reason made sensible, they are representations ‘transgressing the limits of experience’ in a way that ‘emulates the display of reason in its attainment of a maximum’. Aesthetic Ideas are generated in the imagination and can only be appreciated with imagination. They cannot be conceptually articulated, and lack such clarity, but their power lies in their emotional and imaginative conveyance. In a Notebook entry, Coleridge remarks,

> By deep feeling we make our *Ideas dim*—& this is what we mean by our Life—ourselves. (*Notebooks* 1, 921)

If the breeze that runs through and stirs Ideas into activity is indeed the feeling soul, as Coleridge proposes, then contemplation aiming through aesthetic objects can never attain the brightness of polished concepts or shallow pools. Nor can it, however, attain the clarity of more progressed *noesis* that has ascended a level of generality and universality beyond appreciation of this or that beautiful phenomenon, preferring now to contemplate the beauty of just acts, institutions, laws, virtues, and beyond.

In association, different presentations are related through the contiguity of one to the next, in a concatenating series. In contemplative experience, on the other hand, there is an aesthetic wealth that overflows the inadequacy of concepts. Referred to the Ideas, in deference to their transcendence of the concepts of the understanding, the aesthetic presentation moves through them in the expectation of their delivering the meaning of the felt experience. The aesthetic message is rich and evocative, finding its expression and resonance alongside the equally evocative Ideas.

4.2 Coleridge's meditative practice [133]

> Beauty too is spiritual, the shorthand hieroglyphic of truth—the mediator between Truth and Feeling, the Head and the Heart.
> (*Notebooks* 4, 5428)

The following pages on flow were written in rural Miyazaki, south Japan, where I often went fly-fishing along high-mountain rivers and streams, amid powerful currents, sometimes wading chest-deep in gullies where I felt myself more pulled by currents than pushed by oncoming force. If there is any flow in this chapter, it derives from those Miyazaki gorges. I have since moved to the more urban Kyoto, and while pulls and currents are still felt figuratively, most of my thinking is now at a desk or on a bicycle saddle, and I realize that it is high time to meet the mountain streams that water this ancient basin city.[134]

Contemplation has received recent attention in aesthetics of natural environment and art (Carlson and Berleant, 2004; and Cooper, 2006). This chapter is written in the hope of contributing a Coleridgean perspective to this discussion, starting from the transcendental argument that any theory of human life that cannot account for contemplation and poetic creation must be incomplete. I provide an account of meditative experience inspired by Coleridge's writings, but not always directly traceable therein. Sometimes his meditation is a practical exercise to stimulate the imagination, for example in visualizing forms and patterns in a river. At other times it maps and follows trains of thought outside the mind, in the landscape. His thoughts most germane to meditative experience are found in the Meditative Poems, some of which I discuss in the next chapter, and in the nature writing recorded in letters and Notebook entries.

From reading his richly descriptive, phenomenologically penetrating Notebooks, by turns powerfully intense and gently amusing but always remarkably observant, we know that Coleridge's nature walks were vitally integral to his transformative and inspirational meditations. Hazlitt (1836, 288), who would later fiercely criticize Coleridge for his conservatism, reports that,

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[133] Cheyne, 2013, presents an earlier version of this and the following chapter.
[134] More extremely expressed is Nietsche's Maxim 34 in *Twilight of the Idols* ([1895] 1990, 34-8): '*On ne peut penser et ecrire qu'assis* [One cannot think and write except when seated] (G. Flaubert). There I have caught you, nihilist! The sedentary life is the very sin against the Holy Spirit. Only thoughts reached by walking have value.'

> Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copsewood.[135]

Coleridge was as well known to his friends as a walker and a talker, striding and bounding with little regard for conventional paths and borders. Eleven years after Coleridge's death, and fifty years after the event, Wordsworth bids his wife Mary include in her letter to Coleridge's daughter, Sara, a recollection of Coleridge's visit in the year the young poets first met:[136]

> He did not keep to the high road, but leaped over a gate and bounded down a pathless field, by which he cut off an angle.

Rather than the peripatetic epithet that fits Aristotle's pacing and categorizing, Coleridge's course through thought and nature is thoroughly *dia*patetic.

The careful editor of his around seventy Notebooks (their unusual arrangement makes precise enumeration impossible), which Coleridge calls his dear companions, and kept from age twenty-two until his death forty years later, describes these entries as 'meditating on his experiences in the very act of experiencing' (Coburn, 1974, 3). In these Notebooks, she adds, we can:

> catch one of the great minds in history in its wide ranges of introspection, observation, and analysis, looking at what interests him, and following his eye where his attention and imagination direct. (Coburn, 1974, 3)

Here he records many meditations, writing in poetic prose reminiscent of his blank verse. His meditations on water, for example, along the River Greta, are particularly revealing of his meditative practice. Visiting the town of Barnard Castle, in October 1799, he walks along the River Greta, a tributary to the River Tees, paying close, imaginative attention to ever-flowing, ever-reforming patterns in the water. This sustained practice is a reflexive activity, attending to both the rhythmic flow and the mind's processes in the experience.

> River Greta near its fall into the Tees—Shootings of water thread down the slope of the huge green stone—The white Eddy-rose that blossom'd up against the stream in the scollop, by fits & starts, obstinate in resurrection—It *is the life* that we live (*Notebooks* I, 495)[137]

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[135] Cf. Wu (2008, 261), summarizing Hazlitt's later barbs against Coleridge.
[136] This recollects a visit in late 1795. 'Mary Wordsworth to Sara Coleridge', November 7, 1845, in ed. Thomas de Quincey, 1907, 327.
[137] Cf. lines from the second-century *Chaldean Oracles*, quoted in Proclus's *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, trans. Taylor (1818, 249): 'All fountains and principles rapidly whirl round, and perpetually abide in an unsluggish revolution'.

Four years later, he revisits both the scene and the image:

> Shootings of water threads down the Slope of the huge green Stone.—Varieties of this on the Clyde, in my Scotch Tour.
>
> The *white rose* of Eddy-foam, where the stream ran into a scooped or scalloped hollow of the rock in its channel—this shape, an exact white rose, was for ever overpowered by the Stream rushing down in upon it, and still obstinate in resurrection it spread up into the Scollop by fits and starts, *blossoming* in a moment into full Flower.—Hung over the Bridge, & musing considering how much of this Scene of endless variety in Identity was Nature's—how much the living organ's! (*Notebooks* 1, 1589)

In these notes, we observe meditative practice leading to imaginative perception guided by aesthetic Ideas. Seeing the life we live in the eddy's resurrecting rose pattern is no mere projective identification, but uses natural pattern symbolizing the persevering *poiesis*, another symbol of which is the self's holding together through life's vicissitudes.

Writing to Sara Hutchinson, Coleridge produces an intensely expressive and engaging account of a glorious walk from which he has just returned. The walk was not without its dangers: the crags could tear the hands, 'and the gusts came so very sudden and so strong' (*Letters* II, 25th August, 1802). Often the walk required intense concentration for safety's sake, yet he says he has:

> always found this *stretched and anxious* state of mind favourable to depth of pleasurable impression, in the resting places and *lownding* [sheltering] coves.

The crags and coves of anxiety and peace show us the mountains of the mind in the terrain's relief, and both mind and mount can be known more fully through the walk itself.

Coleridge's reflection on the '*stretched and anxious* state' that provides a 'depth of pleasurable impressions' is prescient of the 'flow' described by psychologist Mihaly Csíkszentmihályi. This state of spontaneous joy flows from highly skilled activity requiring such concentration that action and awareness merge. In flow, the present moment becomes foregrounded, and experiencing the activity is intrinsically rewarding (Csíkszentmihályi and Nakamura, 2009,195-206). Csíkszentmihályi chooses the term 'flow' after hearing many research interview accounts use water current metaphors. Flow not only befits Coleridge's meditative experience of rivers and waterfalls, but also suggests a relation of themes shared with Daoist accounts of peak experience.[138]

[138] Cooper (2012) discusses the Way as flow and examines Daoist water imagery.

Coleridge expresses appreciative wonder as he contemplates the aesthetic perfection in the laws and dynamics of hydraulic force:

> the mad water rushes thro' its *sinuous* bed, or rather prison of rock, with such rapid curves, as if it turned not from the mechanic force, but with foreknowledge, like a fierce and skillful driver.[139]

In the same letter he describes a waterfall, Halse Fall (Moss Force), in the Lake District's Buttermere:

> What a sight it is to look down on such a Cataract!—the wheels, that circumvolve in it—the leaping up and plunging forward of that infinity of Pearls and Glass Bulbs—the continual *change* of the *Matter*, the perpetual *sameness* of the *Form*—it is an aweful Image and Shadow of God and the World. (*Letters* II, 853-4)

Such meditative practice can be physically as well as mentally taxing, exercising and strengthening the imaginative faculty with the fullest engagement. Thus Coleridge poetically transcends the fixed and dead concepts of the understanding through the imaginative processes of direct, meditative experience. The strength of attention required in his nature walks, often thirty miles a stretch, he simultaneously applies to focused psychological observation and meditations on thinking itself.

The resonance between natural forms and the thinking mind is not only an observation concerning poetic imagery and composition, it is also a general poetic sense native to the thinking mind. Resonance between thought and nature, then, occurs as an act of primary imagination that poetizes experience and is available to all (although obscured by the film of familiarity), and not only as a literary act (although it occurs here too) available to a few.

> In looking at objects of nature while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering through the dewy window-pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking for, a symbolical language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing anything new. Even when the latter is the case, yet still I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phenomenon were the dim awaking of a forgotten or hidden truth of my inner nature. (*Notebooks* 2, 2546, 1805)

Here Coleridge, on a hazy April night in Malta, is attuned to the search for symbolic meanings in nature. Looking at the 'moon dim-glimmering thro' the dewy window pane' is already an image of poetic symbolism. Dim, reflected, celestial light seen

[139] Cf. Parks (2011, 189): 'What was shattering here was standard usage, even common sense. I remembered when I had written my first novel on kayaking, *Rapids*, the tremendous challenge of describing mountain rivers. Perhaps Coleridge came to places like this because they stretched to the limit his ability to put the world in words.' Parks gives a highly readable, funny, and reflective account of meditative practice used to heal body and soul, discussing Coleridge for about thirteen pages.

through the window, which distorts with a covering of condensation, communicates softly-lit images of seeing and thinking through barriers, transforming media, and reflecting surfaces. This observation of seeking a symbolical language in nature for something within him is also the mood of his Meditative Poems. The dim-glimmering moon seen through the window dew recalls the icicles, 'quietly shining to the quiet moon' in 'Frost at Midnight', sharing a mood of silent longing that is yet content to participate by reflecting. This participatory longing is an act of communion, and is therefore the look of love and not the watching of a spectator. In a Notebook entry of 1807, he describes:

> the eyes quietly and steadfastly dwelling on an object, not as if looking at it or as in any way exerting an act of sight upon it, but as if the whole attention were listening to *what the heart was feeling and saying about it.* (*Notebooks* 2, 3027)

This entry describes a contemplative attending, respecting the place of the contemplated while 'listening for' its meaning and value. Coleridge continues this Notebook entry:

> As when A is talking to B of C—and B deeply interested listens intensely to A, the eye yet steadfastly fixed on C as the subject of the communication–

Here, imagination works within contemplative attending, seeing into and listening for the heart of the matter. To access reason one requires a translucent symbol in the imagination, rather than a concrete opacity to be processed by the understanding. Because the Coleridgean symbol is consubstantial with the power or Idea it symbolizes, meditation on natural phenomena can become a contemplation of the powers or Ideas they exemplify. This contemplation merges with careful perception of what is before one. Thus Coleridge can write,

> I seem to myself to behold in the quiet objects, on which I am gazing, more than an arbitrary illustration, more than a mere *simile,* the work of my own Fancy! I feel an awe, as if there were before my eyes the same Power as that of the REASON—the same Power in a lower dignity, and therefore a symbol established in the truth of things. (*Statesman's Manual*, 72)

In his meditations on the patterns and power of water, or on a moonlit scene through a dewy window, or on the spray of ice as skaters curve, and throughout his Notebooks, Coleridge explores contemplative perception originating from meditative observation of natural objects and processes.

His meditative observations of natural phenomena exemplify a direction of attentive thought pursued by a twentieth century phenomenologist. Introducing *Being*

and Nothingness, Warnock notes a similarity between Coleridge's attentive penetration into appearances and Sartre's excitement at the possibilities available to phenomenology.[140] Sartre becomes excited when he realizes that phenomenological reflections, for example on viscosity, fire, solidity, even on a cocktail glass, can offer profound insights into our imaginative relations with the world. Warnock (in Sartre, 1996, xiii) notes Sartre's 'careful and obsessive absorption in the actual physical properties of the world . . . as a source of revelation of the nature of existence itself', and remarks that:

> Coleridge perhaps more than any other writer in English demonstrated in his detailed description of . . . the movements of water, the same belief that from the sensible properties of things one could deduce not only *their* true nature, but the true nature of the universe at large.

Similarly, Sartre presents a revealing phenomenology of substances, such as his analysis of viscosity as a threatening, 'slimy' compound of qualities ([1943] 1996, 610-2).

Phenomenology is more than just patient, poetic observation, and is the attempt to approach what Husserl calls 'eidetic essences' through careful observation of varying examples, so that through imaginative understanding of the series and variations of some kind of experience, its essence is better understood. These observations and analyses are precisely *phenomenological* because questions regarding the ontological status of the things observed are bracketed. Bracketing these ontological questions is central to *the phenomenological attitude*, which Husserl contrasts with *the natural attitude*. The natural attitude is similar to Santayana's 'animal faith' and Samuel Johnson's 'common sense' position, or naive notion, contra Berkeley, of the externality to the mind of stones and such. The phenomenological attitude, by contrast attempts to perform an eidetic reduction on the phenomena themselves, reducing them to their essences by imaginative variation.

Compelling examples of prototypically phenomenological analysis can be found throughout Coleridge, particularly in his Notebooks, which are strikingly prescient of the kind of phenomenological description seen in Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. In one

[140] Cf. her book-length study (1974, esp. 74-102). Cf. Read (1949, 29-35), which claims Coleridge anticipates existentialism in distinguishing (e.g. at *Notebooks* 4, 4713) Being from existence (although this foreshadowing already occurs in Aquinas, and existentialism is similarly anticipated in Augustine).

entry, Coleridge describes a sensuous-cognitive intimacy as his description immerses into the essence of a substance:

> when you take a bit of Jelly mass you know, you touch only that bit, and yet you somehow or other seem to touch the *whole*. (*Notebooks* 3, 4048)

Such descriptive phenomenology mutually enriches senuous-poetic experience's immediacy and our reflective understanding of the world of substances, feelings, and their meanings.

The genius of symbol-making imaginative perception adds richness to life. Without this symbolic-imaginative aspect, everything is no more for us than its appearance and concept. In Coleridge, the symbol, as opposed to metaphor or analogy, reveals aspects of depth and connoted generality in being carefully observed and described in even the most literal terms. One of Coleridge's examples (*Friend* II, 74; also *Biographia* I, 81) of symbolic imagination's genius is a couplet from Robert Burns's 'Tam O'Shanter':

> Who has not, a thousand times, seen it snow upon water? Who has not seen it with a new feeling, since he has read Burns's comparison of sensual pleasure,
>
> > To snow that falls upon a river
> > A moment white—then gone forever!

Here is the original, which I display because Coleridge misquotes it, with the preceding couplet showing the theme of pleasure's ephemerality:

> But pleasures are like poppies spread,
> You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;
> Or like the snow falls in the river,
> A moment white—then melts for ever

The couplet conveys the Idea's perennial resonance through a genuine symbol. Not only is the Idea aesthetically expressed, the illustrating phenomenon symbolizes it such that similar perceptions will continue to resonate with the Idea, appreciation of which should then deepen throughout one's life.

As the imagination presents translucent symbols, reality is approached through appearances, rather than reality being occluded by appearances, which is the conclusion that the unaided understanding reaches. Far from repeating the usual gloss of Appearance *versus* Reality especially common in Two-World interpretations of Platonism, I present a Coleridgean account of meditative experience showing that rich

experience can be felt more fully for what it is: the appearance *of* reality.[141] Accounts of Platonism that oppose the Two-Worlds interpretation, such as Holger Thesleff's earlier discussed two-level account, resist talk of a realm of appearance utterly separate from a realm of reality. Instead, they present an account of appearance as the appearance *of* reality, rather than a mere simulacrum utterly divorced from reality. A poetic description fine-tuned to appearances and their subtle changes and inter-relations can achieve profound and real resonance when combined with the imaginative use of symbols conveying Ideas or, as Kant put it, elements within experience such as 'death, envy . . . and the like' portrayed as maximums that we do not completely experience, although they affect us profoundly, and which strain to approach Ideas.

For Coleridge, the genius or spirit of imagination is:

> that sublime faculty, by which a great mind becomes that which it meditates on. (*Notebooks* 3, 3290)

Imagination thus dissolves the everyday differentiation of subjective and objective such that 'in every work of art there is a reconcilement of the external with the internal' and that this reconcilement will work:

> to make the external internal, the internal external, to make nature thought, and thought nature—this is the Mystery of Genius in the Fine Arts. ('On Poesy, or Art', Lecture XIII, 1818, ed. Shawcross, 1907, 253-63)[142]

Whether or not this is necessarily true for all fine art and in any historical period is debatable.[143] For Coleridge, genius in Romantic fine art worked towards overcoming the alienation from an increasingly distant external nature. The Romantic return to Platonism was a return from evaluations of utility and reductive explanation to values as ideals and active *physis*, not passive product.

I now pause to balance my account of meditative practice as flow by arguing for the importance of thoughtfully resisting the desire to move passively with the current. Were we to become carried away with finding in Coleridge the flow of Daoism, or that of Csíkszentmihályi, we would have failed to understand with Coleridge the importance of knowing when to resist the flow of impulses and associations, both internal and external. As Coleridge writes,

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[141] Sayers (1985, 55) discusses the 'appearance *of* reality', relating it to Plato's *Republic*.
[142] Cf. Lecture 13, *Lit. Lects* II, 221, which has only the final clause, transcribed from Coleridge's lecture notes (10th March 1818). Cf. *Notebooks* 3, 4397-8.
[143] Cf. Gardner, 2002.

> so long as the mind is entirely passive, so long as there is an habitual submission of the Understanding to mere events and images, as such, without any attempt to classify and arrange them, so long the Chaos must continue. There may be transition, but there can never be progress; there may be sensation, but there cannot be thought; for the total absence of Method renders thinking impracticable (Treatise on Method, [1818] *SWF*, 631)

The concern is not that Daoist and recent psychological accounts of flow are very different from those in Coleridge's nature writing, but rather that we do not allow this real similarity carry us too far and into one extreme, as one is apt to become, amid the fluid, powerful current of this theme. Currents must not only be used but also resisted if one is to maintain considered direction and concern for truth. Excitement with flow must not become a pseudo-mystical device to bypass reflection and due care, and the way must not be confusedly thought of as the destination with which we are truly concerned.

St Catherine of Siena is attributed with saying that,

> The path to heaven lies through heaven, and all the way to heaven is heaven because He said, 'I am the Way'.[144]

In this expression, every part of the right way contains, or is metonymous with, its end. We can understand this when reflect on how Christianity emphasizes the crucial importance of will, that is, of intention and commitment. Catherine does not say that all ways are heaven, but only that all the way to heaven is heaven. Believing all experiences of flow to be ultimate ends and objects is to lack reflective judgment on one's means and methods and to forget that they are not ends in themselves.

Counterbalancing the headlong excitement in the foregoing remarks on flow, we may recall Coleridge's observation that the stream of association unchecked by the senses or by reason leads to delirium or mania respectively (*Table Talk* II, 489, 23 June, 1834). Much earlier, in 1812, he discerns the same cause for caution, namely that the theory of the stream of association applies, when at all, only to 'complete light-headedness; and even to this . . . but partially, because the will and reason are perhaps never wholly suspended.' (*Biographia* I, 112)

With his water-insect image, which we encountered at the start of Ch. 3.4, above (page 158), Coleridge indicates a second check against becoming carried away with flow. Here we observe:

[144] See Day (1948, 167-185). I find a nineteenth-century reference to the same quotation in a homily, 'How to Make Earth Like Heaven', in Farrar (1888, 33), which provides no source, but uses quotation marks.

> a small water-insect on the surface of rivulets, which throws a cinque-spotted shadow fringed with prismatic colours on the sunny bottom of the brook; and . . . [we notice] how the little animal wins its way up against the stream, by alternate pulses of active and passive motion, now resisting the current, and now yielding to it in order to gather strength and a momentary fulcrum for a further propulsion. This is no unapt emblem of the mind's self-experience in the act of thinking. There are evidently two powers at work, which relatively to each other are active and passive; and this is not possible without an intermediate faculty, which is at once both active and passive. (*Biographia* I, 124)

Introducing this passage, and establishing the theme of the higher volition subordinating powers and forces within and without, he asks us to consider,

> what we do when we leap. We first resist the gravitating power by an act purely voluntary, and then by another act, voluntary in part, we yield to it in order to light on the spot, which we had previously proposed to ourselves. Now let a man watch his mind when he is composing; or, to take a still more common case, while trying to recollect a name; and he will find the process completely analogous. (*Biographia* I, 124)

The propelling and resisting water-insect emblemizing the mind at work – tensing and relaxing, allowing, welcoming, and using the flow – also emphasizes braking, halting the flow, being purposeful, and directed, and hence choosing its right moment.[145] Perhaps, then, not *everything* flows, or even ought to. Coleridge's water-insect, emblemizing the mind, chooses not always to flow with the prevailing currents, but also to resist them, letting them flow by. When creatively or philosophically composing, or trying to recollect a name, the mind allows the stream of associations to flow until it confidently propels itself towards the word or image sought.

Coleridge evokes a natural phenomenon to grasp the process of thinking and understanding in metaphorical language. Winning its way to where it would be, the pond skater image perfectly expresses the mind working with and against the flow. Thus this image of patiently thoughtful action inspires Yeats's poem ([1938-9] 2007, 287), 'Long-Legged Fly', whose refrain for each decisive thinker is that:[146]

> Like a long-legged fly upon the stream
> His mind moves upon silence

I do not know if British nature-writer and conservationist Roger Deakin read *Biographia*, but he connects the thinker in the stream of thought with the swimmer in a way strikingly reminiscent of Coleridge's pond skater analogy of the thinker. Thus we

[145] Whale (2000, 170) interprets this vibrant image as illustrating 'how the creative life-force of the mind works in conjunction with the recalcitrance of matter.'

[146] Yeats' allusion to and influence from Coleridge's water-insect passage is discussed at least as early as Rogers, 1975, and D'Avanzo, 1975. Cf. Gibson (2000, 165-7) for discussion.

meet Deakin's 'poet / swimmer who allows things to swim "into his ken"' (2009, 283), and who is both active and passive, taking part in nature and largely, but not just, letting it affect him.

Where Deakin emphasizes the passive, Coleridge emphasizes a dynamic movement between passivity and action. In Coleridge, the relationship between Ideas and thought in philosophy or artistic composition involve what Gregory (personal correspondence, 3 January, 2014) carefully phrases 'agency-within-an-embracing-receptivity'. From this perspective, reason is essentially the receptive relation of the mind to its source, the source of phenomena, and the ultimates of contemplation, that is, to laws of nature, truths of mathematics, and the Ideas of Reason. Where understanding is an active power, imagination is a dynamic power that mediates between reason and understanding (plus the fancy), and so is both receptive and active. Quoting Gregory again:

> Without imagination, of course, understanding is a merely active power and can only 'jerrymander' material as in the histories of Gibbon or Hume, or in 'fancy'. (Personal correspondence)

The image of Coleridge's little pond skater[147] winning its way, gliding now with the current, and now resisting it, visually unites two opposite powers in the act of thinking, or rather one power, the active, and one force, the associative stream, whether one is recollecting a name or writing poetry. The active phase exerts the will, the passive phase surrenders to the current. These stages are active and passive only in relation to each other, Coleridge adds, because the moment the pond skater yields to the current is still a moment of considered choice. The dialectic of two motions propels the process. Concerning the creative process, in the active, self-conscious phase the mind is in control. It makes, for instance, compositional decisions, whereas in the passive phase concatenating thoughts depend upon associated images for inspiration.

Engell, the editor who annotated the Bollingen Series' *Biographia* vol. I, interprets the water-insect metaphor as anticipating the climactic definition of imagination in Chapter XIII, with the phrase 'in all its degrees and determinations' suggesting, he rightly says (*Biographia*, lxxxv), the differentiation between primary and secondary imagination. The relatively passive state of the water-insect analogy they thus interpret

[147] Coleridge does not name this species, calling it only 'a small water insect', however, his epithet 'cinque-spotted' allows us to draw the conclusion that it is a pond skater, and not, for example, a water boatman, because pond skaters move along the water with their two forelegs closely enough together, to make five, not six, spots on the water's surface.

as the primary imagination of perception: the instinctive, mental reflex account defended by Richards, against which I argue in Part Three.

The water-insect yields to the mightier current as the mind yields to a myriad of stimuli when it represents the world. This mental representational model of perception, however, is one of the things I find questionable about the Richards' interpretation of primary imagination. The active state, continues Engell's interpretation of the water-insect passage, would therefore represent the secondary, poetic imagination, which higher degree of the faculty is under greater voluntary control. Coleridge explains that:

> This power first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, controul reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities. (*Biographia* II, 15-16)

However, I reject Engell's interpretation because in the water-insect passage, Coleridge says that between the active and the passive powers lies the intermediate faculty of imagination. The active powers in the water-insect analogy are, I deduce, much more likely to be Will and Reason stretching towards noetic intuition, with the passive powers being receptive Sense, and mechanical Fancy and Memory, than what Engell suggests, namely that the active state is the secondary imagination and the passive state is the primary imagination. Imagination as a faculty comprising primary and secondary imagination cannot without contradiction be the intermediate between primary and secondary imagination, yet this is what Engell, perhaps unwittingly, implies.

Coleridge asserts that,

> the will and . . . all acts of thought and attention are . . . powers, whose function it is to control, determine, and modify the phantasmal chaos of association. (*Biographia* I, 116)

Clearly Coleridge counters more than Hartleyan philosophy here; he is also addressing the need to balance the chaos of free, unprincipled consciousness itself. Thus, in his *Treatise on Method*, he argues that true progress unifies the stimuli of instinctive drives and external attractions with a 'leading thought' and 'must result from the due mean, or balance, between our passive impressions and the mind's reaction on them' (*SWF* I, 630; 634).

The water-insect passage emphasizes the importance of counter-balancing flow, rather than being, as he warns in his 1818 *Treatise on Method*, 'carried hither and thither, like the turtle sleeping on the wave, and fancying, because he moves, that he is in progress' (*SWF* I, 634). This importance given to the balance of active power and

passive flow suggests a similarity of concern with Daoism's *yīnyáng* inter-dependence. Nevertheless, the water-insect passage implies a moral superiority of voluntary reflection and directed choice that is absent from Daoist accounts of the Way. Cooper (2012, 48) relates how the Daoist accounts describe,

> lives that flow like water and develop in the manner of plants, and they are simple and undistorted like an uncarved block of wood.

The Daoist sense of the good life as spontaneous, unbridled flow seems to strain after the impossible human goal that Sartre ([1943] 1996, 626) identifies as desiring to become like God, an in-itself for-itself being. This desire is to realize one's freedom in the effortless way that water is water or a stone is a stone, but with the free and perfect transcendence in which God is what He is.

Coleridge's water-insect, however, not only employs and participates in the processes of flow, much as the Daoist describe, but also resists these processes in considered acts of praxis. A connection can be made here with ethical reflection. Distinguishing between good and evil brings reflective pause for deeper thought and clearer foresight. The ethically concerned thinker does not, therefore, jump trustingly into the metaphorical long and rocky waterfall, like Zhuangzi's sublimely at-one and humble sage, content that all water flows to the same end. Zhuanzi tells of a skilled swimmer who trusts implicitly in the flow and has come to learn that conscious planning is an obstacle to perfecting a skill and to survival itself. Asked to explain his ability to dive into perilously rocky waterfalls and emerge unscathed, he replies,

> I have no way . . . I go under with the swirls and come out with the eddies, following along the way the water flows and never thinking of myself. That's how I stay afloat. (1968, 50: Ch. 19, ll. 49-54)

The Daoists do not consider, in their beautiful, compelling stories, reasons to resist the flow. Thus they yearn for an immemorial, mythical past when 'people lived together with the birds and the beasts' and everything was 'spontaneous' and 'unimpeded' with their inborn natures perfectly realized (Cooper, 2012, 48).

Cooper follows the Daoist water metaphor as a model for a spontaneous, flowing life, noting, for example, that 'water flows downward to lie at the lowest level of a place' (2012, 51). Daoist similarities with Coleridge's active, participatory meditations in nature notwithstanding, this metaphor of water finding its level is precisely one that Coleridge argues against using as a model for humane living. Such hydraulic imagery,

he argues, misconceives human freedom after a mechanical model. Thus Coleridge opposes the political economists who reduce human interaction to the physical dynamics of water finding its level. Even when describing things, as opposed to persons, it would be more accurate and telling, he points out, to say things are always *finding* their level:

> it would be far less equivocal and far more descriptive of the fact to say, that Things are always *finding* their level: which might be taken as the paraphrase or ironical definition of a storm. (*Lays Sermons*, 206)[148]

It would be unfair, however, to read a hydraulic reductionism into Daoism as Coleridge reads reductionism in Adam Smith's political economics. My point here is to caution against finding in Daoism a support for an inert passivity, when really it is the humility required by the Way, as 'It abides in places that men hate',[149] that makes the Daoist naturally at home among the lowly, poor, and sick, and hence makes the water simile appropriate. As Cooper describes:

> The sage's humility, for instance, is represented by water's tendency to flow down to the lowest places. The benefits that his example brings to others is compared to the manner in which water helps plants to grow. (2012, 43)

Cooper, a recent proponent of the Way and its flow, brings active yang to passive yin when he goes on to assert that flow needs purposeful balance if it is to be a virtue. Thus,

> Spontaneity [Daoist *ziran*], left by itself, is in danger of decaying into passivity, into a way of life that *only* responds, that is purely *re*active – like that of a jelly-fish. To avert this danger, spontaneity needs to be balanced with the happiness of someone for whom the world waxes as an arena in which to act. The natural responsiveness of the swimmer to the sea's currents and eddies is something to admire, but sometimes at least we want the swimmer to be going somewhere, to be in the water for some purpose. (46)

Coleridge's describing an active process towards contemplated higher purposes and ultimate ends continues the hierarchically dyadic, two-levels Platonic tradition (an anti-Two-Worlds position) that accords with the position on contemplation that this thesis supports, rather than Daoism's non-hierarchical dyad of *wú wéi*, which always recommends a balance of action through non-action. While in the Platonic lineage, low is suspended from high (i.e. low depends upon high, or descends from high), the Daoist account of the 'ever-flowing circle' holds that 'High and low rest on each other':

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[148] The saying that people and economic values, like waters, find their level flows from Smith, ([1776] 1976, 513).
[149] *Dao De Jing*, Ch. 8: 'The highest goodness is like water'.

> Presence and absence produce each other.
> Difficulty and ease bring about each other.
> Long and short delimit each other.
> High and low rest on each other.
> Sound and voice harmonize each other.
> Front and back follow each other.
> (Laozi, trans. Muller, 1991)

For Coleridge, good poetry always begins in an actively poetic perception, and what we thereby make of the world is, as he describes the primary imagination:

> an echo in the finite mind of the infinite act of creation in the eternal I AM. (*Biographia* I, 304)

As Blake understands, the poet must renew the organs of sense if perception is to be restored. Restoring perception involves an activity not associated with experiences of sheer flow, but is consistent, rather, with the voluntary oscillation between active and passive processes working with and against flow that Coleridge emblematized in his image of the water-insect. Coleridge sometimes sets his hand to the tiller to still the mental and physical flow while engaged with nature. Thus subordinating flow to considered direction, it is still present, but now with conscious reason and not just for aesthetic pleasure and intellectual respite.

I derive from Coleridge the view that beyond meditative, aesthetic flow, and emerging from reflection on it, we can discover its final cause or aim in contemplation. Contemplation delivers the single-mindedness that aesthetic-meditative experience seeks and is the end from which diversions divert. In this stillness is found rest from the flow that flowing nature nevertheless restlessly desires, until it becomes content to relinquish or redeem desire by fulfilling it in contemplation.

I agree with Coleridge scholar and Romanticist Modiano's findings, as she argues that:

> On the one hand, Coleridge finds that the self needs and profits from a continuous engagement with outward objects; on the other hand, he perceives that this activity, while stimulating the imagination to seek new forms of expression can cripple man's intellectual progress. (1985, 32)

So, we have found an exciting connection between Coleridge's meditative practice and Classical Asian accounts of flow, especially in Daoism and the Zen that developed from the meeting of Buddhism and Daoism.[150] These connections logically arise from a

[150] Coleridge was unaware of Zen Buddhism, and, like A. W. Schlegel (Sedlar, 1982, 35-48), he sometimes confuses Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. However, as Ch'an (China), then Zen (Japan) evolved from the synthesis of Buddhism and Taoism in China, it is not surprising to find

similarity of concern, thus indicating that their shared subject matter is something objective. Nevertheless, we also develop from Coleridge the understanding that flow is a means for a rational being, and not an end, which latter is to be found in the contemplation that develops from and ultimately subordinates aesthetic-meditative experience.

Coleridge to be Zen-like in his most Eastern-inspired moments. Note that Coleridge's understanding of the distinctions between Buddhism and its Vedic sources is by no means crudely conflating, and he grasps, for example, that unlike earlier religion in India, 'the religion of Buddha . . . has no castes, at least no compulsory ones, which tend to stop the progression of mankind' (*Phil. Lects* I, 67).

4.3 Contemplation of Idea in Taste, Enjoyment, and Preferences

In Coleridge we glimpse a very practical notion of Ideas at work in us, a work of which we are only dimly and unreflectively aware. Realizing the extent of Ideas at work in us is necessary if we are to be more fully responsible beings. Rising to this challenge, meditative practice must turn to what we think of as the second nature within us, namely our tastes and preferences. Coleridge claims that Ideas are at the heart of aesthetic modes of experience and action and therefore:

> You may see an Idea working in a man by watching his tastes and enjoyments, though he may hitherto have no consciousness of any other reasoning than that of conception and fact. (*Notebooks* 4, 5409)

Sartre made similar suggestions in *Being and Nothingness*, especially in the chapter 'Existential Psychoanalysis'. For him, desires are not contingent matters of fact with nothing remaining after all phenomenal aspects, *être-en-soi*, have been described. Desires are meaningful and therefore a free transcendence, even though one may have no consciousness of any other reasoning than that of conception and fact. The meaning I derive from Coleridge is that tastes and preferences involve Ideas at work in symbols writ as preferences. My general point is that taken-for-granted desires can, when reflected on, show us a great deal about our relationship to the world and that writers who combine phenomenological acumen with literary talent, such as Coleridge, Sartre, and Bachelard, can reveal and communicate these significances.

The symbolic meaning of desire, taste, and preference does not usually receive the attention of reflective consciousness. Nevertheless, in pre-reflective aesthetic activity, we know what we are doing, we just do not articulate it. Rather than articulating what a desire or preference symbolically means, one feels and enacts it. This symbolic meaning is not metaphorical, where one kind of thing carries the meaning of a different kind of thing. The Coleridgean symbol actively instantiates what it aesthetically conveys. Freudian symbolism, on the other hand, is opaque, not translucent, and carries meaning over from one type of object to another according to relations of contiguity, similarity, opposition, and other such associations that Coleridge locates in the domain of fancy.

Because awareness of the symbolic meaning of taste and preference is usually unreflective, familiarity with this meaning is therefore intimate but unenlightened. In the unreflective and ordinary pursuit of taste and preference, one feels and enjoys what one is doing, but does not reflectively know what one is doing. Thus prejudices and

half-understandings are semi-blindly repeated in non-reflective or poorly-reflected community practices. The aesthetic relation with the world can be intensely rich and is always filled with significance, but it requires reflective consciousness and questioning if it is to become enlightened and responsible.

Slowly, the Ideas working in tastes and enjoyments may offer a counter to the conceptual understanding's attempts in the project of living well. However, when the conceptual understanding is far better educated (that is to say, drawn out into reflective self-awareness and social intercourse) and reflective than the aesthetic sense and the symbolic imagination, this counterbalance of Ideas working through tastes and preferences will fail to add serious weight until it becomes reflective.

McGhee (1999) examines how our spontaneous, unreflective sympathy is usually inconsistently given. 'Further reflection', he observes, 'can sometimes draw it out of us', when we are brought to understand that the same principle behind my sympathy in this case can be equally applied in another case which did not receive one's unreflective sympathy. The application of critical judgment to feeling transforms the intuitive, but often mistaken, sense of rightness and wrongness in our moral sentiments into a sense guided and clarified by conceptual understanding. Lack of reflection, on the other hand, continues a want of discernment and an unprincipled, intuitive approach that McGhee identifies as an uncorrected sensibility that moves towards universality when 'the immediate becomes reflective.'

The unprincipled character of unreflective feeling can be observed in a movie that relies on the soundtrack and other associative techniques that invite the audience to identify with some characters and distance themselves from others. In such overly directive movies, music attempts to rectify a shortcoming of the screenplay by cueing the audience's feelings. Not respecting the rationality and dignity of the audience, preferring instead to lull them into being directed, fancy is used in such works to control when it should really be subordinate to imagination. As in rhetoric, the effect, rather than the principle, dominates. The focus on effect above principle thus destroys the exercise of discernment, as feeling becomes the result of prompting, instead of thinking.

Whether in artistic creation, in moral endeavour, or in the everyday enjoyments of tastes and preferences, the exercise of the understanding can educate us towards discernment and principle. In forming principles, the understanding applies the values of Ideas of reason that have been aesthetically conveyed in imagination. Discernment helps ensure that rather than wallow in aesthetic feeling and vague states of

imagination, one's feelings, perspectives, and responses can be taken responsibly and made accountable to the rule of principle.

By now it should be clear that the understanding is neither to be taken as a poor stand-in for reason, nor as necessarily opposed to reason. The point is that the understanding should be accorded its due role and proportion. The proper place for the understanding, in a Coleridgean analysis, is a middle role manipulating concepts and managing distinctions, and not as the end and apex of all human thought, which is the proper place for reason and its Ideas that transcend the minds which contemplate them. Reason exceeds humanity. As Raine (1985, Introduction) glosses, 'Coleridge's reason . . . is at once the act of knowing, and that which is known.' Raine's gloss recalls the words of Plotinus, quoted by Coleridge in *Biographia* I, 251-2, citing *Ennead* III, 8.4:

> the act of contemplation makes the thing contemplated, as the geometricians contemplating describe lines correspondent; but I not describing lines but simply contemplating, the representative forms of things rise up into existence.

Tracing Plotinus's thoughts, Kealey (ed. Gregorius, 2002, 184) draws attention to:

> An important consequence of perfect contemplation, where the contemplated is the same as the contemplation or where thought and being are the same, is that whatever is thought "There" necessarily comes into being. Simply by being what it is, contemplation, *nous*, produces. Nous does not intend to choose or create; yet if the intelligibles subsist, the sensibles will ensue from a necessity inherent in contemplating intelligibles (Vi.7.8). Contemplation, *theoria* is at the same time production, *poiesis*. In this respect, *nous* imitates the infinite, supremely active *dunamis* of the One whose formlessness is productive of all Forms and hence of the existence of all things.

In Coleridge's broadest view, God, Truth, the Soul, etc., as objective Ideas, are not just objects for reason: they are reason, in the mode of constituting it. Imagination opens the mind to reason and its Ideas, incorporating them in aesthetic expression and response through its symbolic capacity. Plato similarly models human openness to the objects of reason, whereby poetry, love, and prophecy are gifts of divine madness, bestowing a supra-rational wisdom.[151] These gifts of divine madness bestow a transcendence beyond *sophrosune* (temperance or self-possession). Beyond rational, calmly self-enclosed, self-possessed virtue exists the possibility of being ruptured by ultimate truth.

Encouraging greater mindfulness and self-reflection in everyday consciousness, Coleridge aimed:

> To refer men's opinions to their absolute principles, and thence their feelings to the appropriate objects, and in their due degrees; and finally, to apply the principles thus ascertained, to the formation of steadfast convictions concerning the most important

[151] See *Phaedrus* 244 a ff., and *Ion* 534 c.

> questions of Politics, Morality, and Religion. (*Friend* I, 16)

Referring opinion to Ideas requires a contemplative attitude, and to refer feelings to their appropriate objects requires aesthetic self-awareness. This aesthetic self-awareness is required if we are to learn the meaning of our aversions and enjoyments, and therefore to learn their moral worth.[152]

Coleridge refers opinions to their principles, testing unreflective notions (including tastes and preferences) against their aims and initiating Ideas. Aims go aslant when their objects are misconceived. Principles relate Ideas to a context conceived by the understanding. The understanding creates conceptions of the current situation, as it creates conceptions of any historical situation, and may then apply principles connecting to Ideas of reason or maxims derived from experience. He complains that,

> So little are even the genuine maxims of expedience likely to be perceived or acted upon by those who have been habituated to admit nothing higher than expedience, . . . that in the whole Chapter of Contents of European Ruin, every Article might be unanswerably deduced from the neglect of some maxim that had been repeatedly laid down, demonstrated, and enforced (*Friend* II, 85)

Principles are needed for enlightened understanding, rather than that which is merely mechanical. Because principles unite with Ideas, they can stabilize noble but easily misguided feelings such as loyalty, protectiveness, and patriotism. Thus Coleridge argues in his Bristol lectures for the:

> necessity of *bottoming* on fixed principles, that so we may not be the unstable Patriots of Passion or Accident (*Pol. Lects*, 33)

When reason enlightens conceptual understanding, it creates the 'higher understanding' and produces the 'discourse of reason' (*Friend* I, 156-57, quoting Hamlet, I.ii.151). With the principle, the deep feeling of imagination-conveyed sublime Ideas connects with clear conceptions produced by the understanding and circumscribes a practical aim.

Bringing Ideas of reason to the understanding provides the Romantic union of 'head, heart, and hand' that Coleridge seeks, resulting in 'those feelings which flow forth from *principle* as from a fountain' (*Friend* I, 123). Using principle to convert opinion away from expedient maxims and towards Ideas directs feelings toward their

[152] Kooy (1999, 107) studies how Schiller's notion of aesthetic education influences Coleridge themes. Kooy finds Schiller's *Bildung* to influence Coleridge's notion of aesthetic cultivation that counterbalances economic-industrial civilization. Kooy suggests that: 'Schiller's "aesthetic education" would become . . . the conceptual frame for Coleridge's "imagination"'.

appropriate ends, and this is the sense and the end of aesthetic education and reflection that this thesis supports. Coleridge observes that,

> There seems a tendency in the public mind to shun all thought, and to expect help from any quarter rather than from seriousness and reflection: As if some invisible power would think for us, when we gave up the pretence of thinking for ourselves. (*Friend* I, 123)

When thinking for oneself is given up, the impetus is carried by the unreflective invisible power in our tastes and opinions. This unreflective force does not, however, think for us, and is pushed on by prejudice, rather than pulled forth by ideals. Desires, tastes, and preferences may originate from strongly felt but dimly understood Ideas conveyed by imagination, but they must be subjected to precise and conscientious reflection if their ideal origin is to be reflected in their final aim. Reflective awareness and questioning are required to steer vague but powerful aesthetic appetences toward their appropriate ends. Thus Coleridge, exhorting his readers to feel with reflective aesthetic awareness on the one hand, and to think beyond cool reason on the other, asserts that his aim is to embody reason:

> to make the reason spread light over our feelings, to make our feelings, with their vital warmth, actualize our reason (*Friend* I, 108)

An example of imagination failing to inform and reform reflective conceptual understanding can be seen in Abraham Lincoln's relation to freed slaves. Lincoln's conceptual understanding of democracy appropriately holds that anyone who would not be a slave ought not to be a master of slaves. Here is an example, from 1854, of his enlightened, reflective understanding:

> If A. can prove, however conclusively, that he may, of right, enslave B.—why may not B. snatch the same argument, and prove equally, that he may enslave A?—
>
> You say A. is white, and B. is black. It is color, then; the lighter, having the right to enslave the darker? Take care. By this rule, you are to be slave to the first man you meet, with a fairer skin than your own.
>
> You do not mean color exactly?—You mean the whites are intellectually the superiors of the blacks, and, therefore have the right to enslave them? Take care again. By this rule, you are to be slave to the first man you meet, with an intellect superior to your own.
>
> But, say you, it is a question of interest; and, if you can make it your interest, you have the right to enslave another. Very well. And if he can make it his interest, he has the right to enslave you. (Lincoln, 2009, 48)

Despite Lincoln's developed, reflective conceptual understanding, his sensibilities at the level of tastes and preferences are not so enlightened. He has not, then, discovered in his

feelings and tastes the same dangerous and fallacious prejudices he finds easily in verbal expressions of opinion. His preference was for the freed slaves to emigrate, for example to Liberia, and to pursue the policy of colonization (Jaffa, 1959, 380ff.). In a speech of 1857, he describes this as the favourable policy, fallaciously conflating ancestral geographical origin with what is morally right, all the while forgetting his own non-native-American ancestry:

> Let us be brought to believe it is morally right, and, at the same time, favorable to, or, at least, not against, our interest, to transfer the African to his native clime, and we shall find a way to do it, however great the task may be. (Lincoln, 1990, 398-410)

In fairness to Lincoln, it must be remembered that he was an American politician, and that the question of 'repatriation' was a widely-canvassed feature not only of some abolitionists but also of many Southerners whose votes or at least grudging assent Lincoln hoped to get (and thus prevent war) in what was probably party policy. Note also that Lincoln skillfully avoids asserting that 'repatriation' is morally right, and instead delivers a subtler, more guardedly conditional statement: 'Let us be brought to believe it is morally right, and . . . we shall find a way to do it'.

Notwithstanding how much the ardent emancipator understands racial equality before God, he neither feels nor imagines (so far as we can tell from both his public speeches and his private letters) this equality as friendship, social equality, and cultural harmony. In fact, by 1858, Lincoln confides in a letter that he:

> disclaimed all intention to bring about social and political equality between the white and black races. (167)

I argue that conceptual understanding can critically transform opinion through principle, but sensibilities cannot be reformed until they are acknowledged as amenable to, and in serious need of, reflection. Most of the time, people are ready to assert that their tastes and enjoyments are based on harmless, idiosyncratic facts. If preferences are taken as simple facts about oneself, it will be assumed that they are irrational idiosyncrasies of the individual that are beyond being right or wrong. Taken as brute facts, preferences and enjoyments cannot be understood as amenable to reflection.

If obscure aesthetic yearnings are not considered as having ultimate aims, and are considered only as relating to conceptions and facts, then they can only feelingly and experimentally seek out objects and courses rather than aim for clear fulfilment according to principle. These obscure aesthetic yearnings are often inherited, culturally

transmitted, and become ingrained as a second nature. We laugh here, smile there, and grimace elsewhere because someone influential did so, yet when we follow the example, we often miss the principle, if there was one. Great dark regions of our understanding are occupied by unexamined aesthetic preferences, the conservative tendencies of all minds.

On the supreme importance of principle, as fount of virtue, Coleridge says:

> O that my readers would look round the world . . . and make . . . a faithful catalogue of its many miseries! From what do these proceed, and on what do they depend for their continuance? Assuredly for the greater part on the actions of men, and those again on the want of a vital principle of action. We live by faith. The essence of virtue consists in the principle. And the reality of this, as well as its importance, is believed by all men in fact, few as there may be who bring the truth forward into the light of distinct consciousness. (*Friend* I, 100)

Following this thought process for twenty-two pages, and through three essays, he discerns how unexamined preferences resemble broad but unenlivened maxims of prudence:

> The widest maxims of *prudence* are like arms without hearts, disjoined from those feelings which flow forth from *principle* as from a fountain. (*Friend* I, 123)

They resemble instincts, unintelligently reacting to objects with more or less fixed and unreflective responses. Hence pre-reflective preferences are disjoined not only from 'those feelings which flow forth from principle', but also from each other. Their obscurity and apparent naturalness are cited to defend their contradictoriness.

Taking preferences and attitudes as basic facts is a mode of Plato's *eikasia*, the pre-epistemic mental state of the cave's unreleased prisoners, and the Divided Line's lowest state of mind. Just as it takes the sensible appearances of the world at face value without any reflection on non-phenomenal reality, naïve *eikasia* takes moral and aesthetic notions as nothing more than conceptions and facts. That is to say, this unreflective mode accepts aesthetic qualities without question, leaving the deceptive impression of moral quality imparted to the object. The impression is deceptive in Sartre's sense of bad faith: Uncritical, *eikasia* takes moral and aesthetic qualities as factical existence rather than as transcendental essence, the former being an attribute of the object, the latter of the Idea (or for Sartre, the Hegelian for-itself).

Reflection on tastes and preferences brings wisdom to appreciation and judgment rather than prolonging the prejudices of unreflective enjoyment. However, reflection on enjoyment and preference cannot be the same as reflection on conceptual

understanding. Transformative reflection on conceptual understanding involves discovering fallacies and, ultimately, on discovering conceptual contradiction. Reflection on enjoyment, however, is contemplative and only minimally, because medially and not finally, conceptually analytic. It involves a focused attention on what it is that is being enjoyed and why this esteemed quality or virtue is valuable enough in itself to be worthy of beholding. Reflection on enjoyment requires, eventually, a contemplation of Ideas.

As in Plato's Divided Line, the greatest epistemological difference exists between the taken-for-granted appearances of the world in *eikasia*, and the noetic contemplation of their formative reality. Plato proposes that knowledge develops beyond taking appearance for granted (*eikasia*/*aisthesis*), first by developing pragmatic acquaintance with the laws of the things we experience (*pistis*), then by reflectively grasping that experience with concepts manipulated in the understanding (*dianoia*), before a dialectical and contemplative approach is made in *noesis*. As we saw in the Part Two chapters on Plotinus's and Coleridge's notions of Ideas, there is also a post-Platonic tradition of contemplating Ideas through *aisthesis.* Plato himself is aware of this possibility, when he describes poet, the prophet, and the lover as, however obscurely, and in divine madness, contemplatives of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

For Coleridge, although the Idea may be 'asleep', 'dreaming', or 'somnambulant' in aesthetic awareness,[153] it is nevertheless the poetic task of personal aesthetic development to become self-aware of the symbolic significance of the Ideal in the aesthetic. Aware that the course of initiative Ideas may become misguided by an understanding that takes aesthetic movements as bare facts and conceptions, Coleridge writes that:

> progress itself follows the path of the Idea from which it sets out; requiring, however, a constant wakefulness of mind to keep it within the due limits of its course. (Treatise on Method, *SWF* I, 633)

Returning to the Sartrean examples of desire, the enjoyment of objects can be seen as a process symbolizing our relationship to the whole world, as in his treatment of enjoying cigarettes as a way of symbolically consuming the whole world in an impression of using it up and drinking it in. In such enjoyments and aesthetic relations, we poetize our relations with aspects of the world. Perhaps a traditional recipe is

[153] See *Friend* II, 75, n.3: 'Plants are Life dormant; Animals = Somnambulists; the mass of Mankind Day-dreamers; the Philosopher only awake.'

personalized by replacing sweet apple juice with light vinegar, a touch of salt added to the sugar, and a family recipe becomes part of the family history, adding savour to enjoyments and reflection on even the most apparently basic moments of aesthetic pause. A preference for a certain alcoholic drink that no child could ever like might express coming to terms with astringency in adult responsibilities and drinking in the bitter drafts of life.

The theme of everyday aesthetics has received considerable attention in recent years (see, e.g. Saito, 2007; Scruton, 2011), yet the door into this important area of cultural understanding has still barely been opened. Coleridge notes how the profound pleasure taken in everyday comforts and ordinary paraphernalia approached contemplatively can assuage physical pain:

> My enjoyments are so deep, of the fire, of the Candle, of the Thought I am thinking, of the old Folio I am reading–and the silence of the silent House is so *most & very* delightful–that upon my soul! The Rheumatism is no such bad thing as *people make for*. (*Letters* I, 298)

Conceptions and facts cannot explain tastes and enjoyments that run so deep. The aesthetic can no more be derived from the empirical fact than can the ethical. Tastes are not brute facts. They exhibit the transcending qualities of directedness and rationale, the purposes of rhyme and reason.

We have seen that for Coleridge a far greater number are possessed by Ideas than the few who possess them. The working out of Idea in everyday aesthetic experience, which working Coleridge claims can be traced in taste, preference, and enjoyment, is therefore most usually detected only in vague, unreflective awareness. No specific concept contains this Ideality, so most people do not consider it as a subject for reflective thought. They do, however, pre-reflectively linger in the meaning-rich and value-suggestive shadows of aesthetic sense coloured by its light. Reflective aesthetic education is almost non-existent, even today, and it could well be that society in a distant future will judge us as charmingly or dangerously primitive with respect to our level of reflective aesthetic awareness. Taste and enjoyment is, nevertheless, an occasional subject for contemplation and reflection.

Much aesthetic appreciation lies in the contemplative beholding of experiential qualities, involving a kind of basking in its meaning where concepts fail. The recalcitrance of aesthetic experience to conceptualization justifies, to a degree, this basking. Still, referring aesthetic Ideas to principles, a task for the understanding, does

provide some clarification. There is meaning in our everyday tastes and enjoyments, but, like Kant's notion of art as purposiveness without purpose, this meaning tantalizingly eludes the grasp of conceptual thought.[154] Everyday aesthetic enjoyment shares an overflowing quality with high art, although more modestly. The *jouissance* of the experience, its play, our enjoyment in it, and our right and ability to feelingly relate to the way we live our lives is what can be contemplated. This enjoyment can become principled, thus transforming its richly significant tones and sensitivities into virtues that stem from fidelity to the ultimate objects of contemplation.

What I find attractive in Coleridge is his dual recognition that (1) Ideas, if they are to mean something to us, must find aesthetic expression; and (2) it is not enough to remain unreflective in this aesthetic expression. Aesthetic taste and feeling must be supplemented by reflection if one is to be fully conscious of its Ideal direction, and if one is therefore to move effectively in this Ideal direction. Without fulfilling the criterion of reflection, one is more likely to be an obstruction than an aid to Ideal tendency. An appropriate parallel here can be found in Hegel's criticism of the beautiful soul, over-reliant on feeling and sentiment and lacking in active self-awareness.

Both thinkers recognize that a potent danger in Romanticism is the possibility of remaining in the aesthetic mode without recognizing and clarifying the resonance of the Ideal intimated in reflection. Aesthetic education therefore involves coming to clearer terms with enjoyments and preferences, and with our antipathies too. Schiller's notion of the beautiful soul, in his essay 'On Grace and Dignity' (*Neue Thalia*, June 1793), inspired by the unity of aesthetics and ethics in Kant's *CJ*, does not suffer from the malady later diagnosed by Hegel as a pining for an unattainable Romantic ideal.[155] Schiller's beautiful soul harmonizes *Pflicht und Neigung* (duty and inclination) in recognizing the kinship of the good and the beautiful (Curran, 2008). To unify ethical duty and natural inclination is thus to poetize life in ethical-aesthetic creation. Here we find the Romantic faith in the deep identity of beauty and goodness, theorized by Schiller, developed in Coleridge, and achieving its most succinct expression in Keats' concluding lines in his 'Ode on a Grecian Urn':

[154] I refer to *CJ*, §44: Fine art . . . is a way of presenting that is purposive on its own and that furthers, even though without a purpose, the culture of our mental powers to facilitate social communication.

[155] Schiller's beautiful soul notion develops from Wieland's novel *Geschichte des Agathon* (1766-7), which characterizes the fictional Danae's beautiful soul. The notion is also treated in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795-6), in the pivotal chapter, on piety, 'Confession's of a Beautiful Soul'.

> ‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty’,—that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

The identification of Beauty and Truth originates in Plato’s doctrine of the unity of the Forms, akin with the Socratic unity of the virtues, and the ideal of the appetite and the enthusiastic spirit being educated and guided by reason. The textual fount of these notions is Plato’s *kalokagathia*, the beautiful goodness central to the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, especially in Alcibiades’ recognizing the powerfully attractive force of Socrates’ virtue, likened to a pot-bellied Silenus statue, an ugly satyr figure on the outside, but containing many drawers, each holding a resplendent golden godkin:

> so godlike – so bright and beautiful, so utterly amazing (*Symposium*, 217a)

Ideas must find aesthetic expression if they are to be something and mean something to us. As Coleridge explains,

> by the Symbol the Idea . . . is rendered cogitable; but by the Idea the symbol is rendered intelligible (*Marginalia* V, 780)

However, Ideas also require reflective analysis if they are to be expressed in principles and continue their transformative effects through the meaningful activities of our lives. The Ideal in aesthetic expression aids the *elenchos* and the self-questioning in critical thought, calling for a double reflection. Firstly, how do my life and aesthetic responses correspond with the Ideals expressed and implicitly valued in my aesthetic response? Secondly, what am I doing agreeing with, or rejecting, in enjoying this activity or appreciating this artwork? And is this Ideal reflected throughout my life and dealings with others, or do I compartmentalize it, voicing it only in certain aesthetic enjoyments?

Much in our directly felt tastes and pleasures is not well expressed in our thoughts and attitudes towards these enjoyments. A burst of laughter, a pang of desire, a pique of interest seems to justify its own existence without need for reflection on its meaning. This kind of aesthetic experience gives the impression of somehow speaking for itself and being sufficient to itself. The full experience may be ineffable, but the impression yet remains that there is no need to express it, even if we could, with a meaning built up from clear and distinct concepts. What does this experience mean? It means *this*. And *this*, the aesthetic experience itself, seems to bring its justification, and a feeling for its meaning, immediately with its appearance. When a justification and a deeper questioning of its meaning and significance is called for, the request is commonly

interpreted as an indication that the enjoyment would be neither accessible nor properly appreciated by the inquirer.

Yet the obscurity and opacity of this aesthetic experience, and the acceptance of its value as self-evident, carries with it the risk of allowing experience, and its inherent meanings, to become muddled and get carried beyond the bounds of good control. In enjoyment, to what extent is one even aware of what it is that one is enjoying? To what end is the enjoyment pursued, and what does it mean if one simply acquiesces in the mode of enjoyment? In this mode, we live in the power, but do not work in the light, of the Ideas and dynamics working through us.

It may seem unnecessarily harsh to put the enjoyment of tastes and preferences enjoyment to interrogation, but this depth of questioning is necessary in an examined life. There was a time in recent memory when racist humour could be judged to be harmless enjoyment. How deep can the *elenchos* go? Answer: as deeply as we can reflect. The questioning itself awakens this reflection. The questioning, like Socrates' *elenchos* that stings and benumbs before it orients, must therefore go deeper than our unpractised and shallow reflective awareness. Like the perspectival vanishing point, Ideas recede from conceptual grasp as far as we pursue, but their direction in our behaviour, appreciations, tendencies, and attitudes clarifies with educated attention and questioning.

As in Freud's objective of transforming obscure motivation with conscious insight (where *id* was, there *ego* shall be), we can seek awareness of the Ideas and dynamisms we muddle through in our abstractly formed lives so that we can then work in their lights. This would construe autobiography *concrète* as poetic endeavour.

4.4 Ars biographica poetica

> We all have obscure feelings that must be connected with some thing or other—the Miser with a guinea—Lord Nelson with a blue Ribbon—Wordsworth's old Molly with her washing Tub—Wordsworth with Hills, Lakes, & Trees— / all men are poets in their way, tho' for the most part their ways are *damned bad ones*. (*Letters* II, 768)

In this chapter, I propose my ideal of the art of poetic life-writing. This ideal views all conscious human life as shaped through the poetic art of contemplating values and applying them to existence. I hold the *ars biographica poetica* to be the fundamental art basic to all others and the art in which the axiological unity of ethics and aesthetics is most clearly felt and readily acknowledged. This chapter develops my view that took shape while considering Coleridgean themes, nevertheless, I hope to present here my original thoughts, with Coleridge interwoven.

With Coleridge, I describe imagination as a creative, life-enhancing impulse to connect profound but dimly-understood presentiments and Ideas with our surroundings. This impulse propels great art and everyday aesthetics alike. I introduce *ars biographica poetica* as the notion that we all use creative freedom in living and shaping our lives, and thus engaged in the poetic art of life writing. Always *in media res*, to use Horace's phrase from *Ars poetica* (l. 149), and thus necessarily improvisational, most lives resemble fragmentary scribbles, or preparatory sketches making do with ill-reflected reasons, slipshod rhymes, or worse, compulsive or half-hearted repetition.

Too-often rough-hewed, the art of living is nonetheless a creative, poetic art. We create our autobiographies with varying degrees of consciousness, truthfulness, aesthetic sense, and ethical merit. While literary poetry proceeds from the voluntary efforts of talent and genius, there is a spontaneous, less reflective poetry of the ordinary shaped from the significances accorded to objects, aims, and relations in our lives. This poetry of the ordinary aestheticizes the truth on which we are daily nourished:

> The *Heart* should have *fed* upon the *truth*, as Insects on a Leaf—till it be tinged with the colour, and shew its food in every the minutest fibre. (*Letters* I, 115, October, 1794)

The poetry of the primary imagination, previously discussed in detail in chapter 3.3, gives delight, sorrow, tragedy, and flashes of beauty, to the everyday surroundings and experiences of the miser, the admiral, old Molly, the poet walking in nature, and you and me. From this primary imagination, Coleridge distinguishes the secondary imagination as,

> still identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealise and unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead. (*Biographia* I, 304)

The secondary imagination's poetry, to reiterate from chapter 3.3, consists in verse and other forms of art that operate in the absence of their creators and distinctly survive their deaths. Such artworks are thus called creations in a fuller sense than the creativity of thought and imaginative perception that the primary imagination generates. Primary imagination's creations survive in culture as sentiments, manners, and views nursed in families, institutions, and societies, but these are nonetheless things that, although capable of resuscitation or resurrection, become extinct the moment they are not enacted. These creations are, all the same, profound poetry, and it is the duty and privilege of genius to penetrate their depths and discern their meanings in transforming them, through the secondary imagination, into works of poetry or philosophy and thereby to represent objectively the concerns of the human soul to itself.

Contemplation benefits more than the mind of the individual contemplative, and its wider benefits become clearer when the contemplative concentrates on the power of discernment. Discernment allows both (a) a fuller, more engaged experience, and (b) *theoria*'s intellectual and practical virtues to be shared such that well-discerned experience is clearly communicated and can cultivate and orient others. There is no wisdom, or clarity of vision, without discernment.[156] Thus Hegel ([1807] 1997, Preface) remarks on the Schellingian notion[157] of an immediately, sensuously intuited Absolute: there is no wisdom in standing before an obscure Absolute as 'the night in which all cows are black'.

More imaginative poetry exists in a person's ordinary life than in works of fancy or fantasy. This is because fancy and fantasy are only rarely poetic, being more concerned with entertaining wishes and desires than with imaginatively approaching truths that cannot be otherwise approached. Even the basest human life, in contrast, has values, however dimly contemplated and vaguely appreciated, when desires are not being pursued. Imagination, as a mental effort, holistically engages reality to retain value

[156] The progressing contemplative has a duty of cultivation either to remain silent in mystical quietism, or to describe the *theoria* as discernfully as possible, those others, however, who are satisfied to remain in obscurities and half-knowledge cannot be called *mystics*, and are more correctly called *mystifiers*.
[157] Schellingian, because Hegel (1807) politely says in his Preface that while this may not be Schelling's view, certain of his followers express it.

beyond fleeting moments. It resists the forces of materialistic concerns, sustaining access to Ideas through their aesthetic expression. Here, thinking sees through details and facts towards principles and values. Such sustained access can be achieved on nature walks, in religious meditation and prayer, and even in a concentrated appreciation of sport. They all exemplify an imaginative appreciation of aesthetic, moral, and alethic qualities leading the mind, and enabling it to contemplate the Ideals of perfection: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

Through the poetic meaning seen in a gesture, we recognize in another's life the creative discovery of value and purpose, or its tragic curtailment. The worthiness of pursuing that Ideal remains, although human life may perish in its pursuit. In being moved, we affirm the value of honouring the Ideal, and thus properly dignify the person who suffers in its pursuit. Or, if nothing is tragically curtailed, we are moved in finding something worthy of admiration and hope, on one side, or of being reviled on the other.

The sense of aesthetics I mean is very deep, one that can operate between split seconds, finding meaning in feelings, and striving, at its best, to find Ideal guides and principles to shape life. Whatever moves us, emotionally connects us with Ideals we take to be of general and universal value. Or, if the value intuited is not held to be universal, then we rightly dismiss the experience as down to tiredness, sickness, or illusion. Ideals move us, and operate, though we do not always reflect on this, in our every emotion. To move us thus, and hence to have meaning for us, Ideals require aesthetic expression. Because this aesthetic work expresses Ideas through sensuous experience, Coleridge can call imagination the:

> Laboratory in which Thought elaborates Essence into Existence (*Notebooks* II, 3158)

This aesthetic expression is imagination's work and play. I suggest that there is a sense of poetry at work when we are moved that is absent or unconveyed when we remain unmoved. Here, *poetry* denotes a meaning broader than *verse*, or *fiction*, and denotes the aesthetic expression of meaning and value in our lives. I suggest that this poetry at work in our lives, and in our being moved, is the imagination's aesthetic expression of Ideas. In sum, we are moved by what we value, and those values are bound to Ideals, which must be expressed aesthetically, through the imagination, if they are to have any meaning in our lives. It is the poetry in real life, its tragedy, its hope, and its transformation of the bare event into the aesthetic evocation of value that moves us.

An admirable person, whether factual or fictional, whose successes and noble failures can move us, is commendable because of being a creation, and not because of being something naturally formed, like a beautiful face or an unpolished talent. The courage of pursuing moral ends has the power to move, and this courage is a creative act. As such, the hero is self-made through a committed series of chosen acts. There is a sense, then, in ascribing and admiring a poetic quality in those who shape the better part of their lives by commitment to Ideals. These Ideals are reflected in their sense of honour, justice, tradition, or pattern of community life. Yet no hero invents or redefines honour, courage, or any of the virtues, however much our desire to praise these people suggests such superlative phrases. The admirable are admired for luminously embodying the Ideal, not for its creation. Hence the Ideal and the hero's commitment to it are simultaneously admired.

We may marvel, reading Homer's *Iliad*, at Achilles' prowess and the glory his demigod powers can win, but it is Hector who deserves our admiration. Achilles knows he is invincible, except at his heels, so in him we cannot admire courage. Hector, however, is the existential hero: fully knowing Achilles' semi-divine nature, he nevertheless exits Ilion's walls to his fate because he knows it is the honourable action. He must fight for his family and his people. We witness his courage. More than death, he fears failing his wife and his nation. We hear his prayer to Zeus that his son be a greater man to bring joy to his mother. When we admire Hector, it is for his commitment to honouring the Ideals by embodying them. This commitment is creative because embodying Ideals is a poietic, cultivating act, greater than simply leaving the Ideals detached, far away in the heavens, for speculative adoration. The poietic embodiment of cultivating principles, then, is at the heart of *ars biographica poetica*, in uniting active with contemplative life.

Suspecting that Hector never existed need not make it irrational to be moved by his fate.[158] It is the poetry that moves us, after all. By poetry, I do not mean that the technical skill in verse is what moves us; I am not primarily referring to admiring the artistry. The poetry intended here is the same as that exemplified in real life and developed from the primary imagination. By the poetic, then, I mean the active creation of meaning and purpose through the aesthetic conveyance of Ideals appreciable by others, whether or not they fully understand it. Whether the person considered is

[158] I refer to, without directly engaging, to Radford's (1975) introduction of the paradox of fiction to Analytic-style philosophy.

historical, contemporary, or fictional, it is the Ideal poetically embodied in aesthetic expression that moves us.

All people are poets in their way, as Coleridge says in the epigraph to this chapter, because we all imbue surrounding things and relations with resonant, symbolic meaning. We give a setting and expression to obscure feelings, casting judgements into actions, attitudes, tastes, and preferences. There exists an elementary, though unexamined, ethics in even the meanest aesthetic taste or preference, because even these exercise choice on the basis of appeals to sensibility that feelingly strains after some value rather than another. We compose autobiography *concrète* in our inevitably creative lives, however damned bad they may be.

Life experienced, expressed, and lived onwards, is a poetic act. The rhyme and reason in what I call *ars biographica poetica* is often spontaneous. Such improvisation has its virtues, yet it is too often completed under the dim lights of unreflective taste, desire, and enjoyment. Life's themes and methods are too easily repeated as habitual patterns, preventing their finest enactment and expression. Too often, doggerel prevents poetry, and instead of truthfulness creating beauty, people merely seek the appearance of justification. In a notable coincidence of thought, Nietzsche (1878, §610) expresses this insight in language strikingly similar to Coleridge's:

> *People as bad poets* – Just as bad poets in the second half of a line, look for a thought to fit their rhyme, so people in the second half of their lives, having become more anxious, look for the actions, attitudes, relationships that suit those of their earlier life, so that everything will harmonize outwardly. But then they no longer have any powerful thought to rule their life and determine it anew; rather in its stead, comes the intention of finding a rhyme.

Habitual patterns are marks of style and personality, but they are inauthentic in that they repeat, rather than reflect. To reiterate, Coleridge affirms that only a few possess Ideas, while most are possessed by them. Insufficient contemplation of a guiding Idea condemns one to repeat its bungled, inadequate expression working through the stuff of life. If Ideas are not consciously approached, the person is possessed by Ideas as if haunted by an obscure fate, blindly moved in an invisible current.

Repeated mistakes and inadequate expressions occur compulsively, like the return of the repressed in Freudian theory. Mays (2013, 52-3; 56) notes a biographical theme that Coleridge was compelled to repeat and explore, but never overcome:

> Coleridge fixed early on the theme of incompleteness and yearning, bolstering it with a sense of buoyancy lost as youth gave way to manhood, and it was never fundamentally

> revised. [. . . His] command over what he wrote developed, but the plotline hardly at all because it was a situation to come to terms with

In poems that 'consistently press toward an end just beyond the words', Mays diagnoses an:

> obligation continually to rewrite the same story . . . [a] need for renewal . . . [in] dedication to an idea of Reason which a process (Imagination) serves. (2013, 7)

That there is 'a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will' (*Hamlet*, V.ii, l.11) is implicit in Coleridge's philosophy of the Idea. For Coleridge, obscurely intimated Ideas can possess us. More soberly, this means that Ideas often powerfully influence thoughts and actions without our recognizing it. Recognition is superior because clear-sighted, and hence less prone to ethical and practical mistakes analogous to fumbling in the dark. The danger in feelingly moving with powerful Ideas that possess us is not a danger originating in the Idea, but in its misconception.

We are inevitably prone to this danger, because any conception of an Idea is a misconception, and any 'sense' of it is no sense of it all, but rather an aesthetic resonance to its sensuous, material expression, as happens in religious observance, artist exhibition, or in many ordinary instances of everyday aesthetics.[159] Enlightenment, or growing from being inchoately possessed by Ideas to rationally possessing them, occurs in individuals, but also in cultures and societies. Coleridge agrees with Plato that the rule of the wise is the Idea of all governments and therefore is the end to which they tend, often blindly, and against the violence of self-interested, materialistic appetite.

Even 'the best and the wisest' among political leaders, Coleridge (*Notebooks* 1, 1612) insists, are subject to 'eyes filmy with drowsy empiricism', meaning that their virtue is limited and 'akin to certain errors', with the very passions and instincts acting as, I imagine, a hammer and forge, correcting their imperfectly realized virtues. These, then, may,

> by their folly work out the wisdom of God. (*Notebooks* 1, 1612)

Coleridge's romanticized Platonism thus suggests that Ideas can be felt in a sensuous, aesthetic modality of mind that is initially unreflective, but is yet a path, low on the gradual incline from cave to open sunlight. This ascent is faltering and ever-prone to repeated error. As Nietzsche (Maxim 30, *TI*, [1895] 1990, 34-8) puts it:

[159] See Saito, 2007, for interesting observations of everyday aesthetics.

> One rarely falls into a single error. Falling into the first one, one always does too much. So one usually perpetrates another one — and now one does too little.

A compulsion to modify and repeat patterns drives an initially somnambulant path towards Ideal contemplation and the perfection of virtue. Ideas are thus lived, and deep calls to deep.

Any argument that one holds, any virtue one pursues, and indeed all ends and activities ought to be examined, and this is the deeper meaning of the Socratic *elenchos* we discussed in Part One. Most people believe that they already intimately know the meaning of their habits, and their aesthetic likes and dislikes. A truly philosophical examination therefore requires that one's ignorance be disclosed at a deep level that provides a motivational unease. With this unease, one will then exert his or her mental powers to begin to know oneself.

The revolution in thought and behaviour that this deeply reflective examination brings is the practical value of contemplation, which reveals values to live by, rather than obscurely felt, powerful Ideas to be misunderstood, or lifeless rules that blindly possess and ruin. To sustain responsible, awakened living requires an imaginative approach to the life one lives, and to the life abroad, as One Life. Otherwise, one will selfishly take one's own desires and wishes as important truths occasionally distracted by the life around us and never think intensely enough how ultimate ends might in fact be objective realities much more real than individual fantasies and acquisitive desires.

Sometimes one may only retrospectively examine, but any worthwhile examination will involve contemplation. This can be taken as a maxim toward the greater possession of Ideas. To possess Ideas, rather than blindly move in their sway, is to be authentic, i.e. to take charge of one's self and personality in leading a life. Hence the *ars biographica poetica* deepens with praeter-conceptual contemplation. As a cavern forms by an underground river coursing through limestone, meditative experience enlarges our capacity to echo the transcendent. This deepening, aesthetic application of Ideas develops what Coleridge calls 'the one Life within us and abroad', and generates yearnings beyond conceptually understood experience:

> Ideas . . . by means of the IMAGination, by force of which the Man . . . feels Wants . . . and proposes to himself Aims & Ends . . . that can be gratified and attained by nothing which Experience can offer or suggest. (*Notebooks* 4, 4692)

We can conceive the primary and secondary imaginations as original and secondary *poiesis*. The primary work configures perception and its *poiesis* imparts, in

my interpretation of Coleridgean imagination, a luminosity of value throughout the material of sense, rich in sensuous infinitude. A world in a grain of sand; fun in a penguin's waddle; inevitability in the repeated notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony: thus fate knocks at the door. The qualitative in these perceptions develops from and supervenes upon the physical. Nevertheless, the qualitative construction, as imaginative composition, is an everyday work of art, a quotidian wonder.

Considering profound and intense contemplative experiences, and the ordinary intervals of everyday life in between them, I suggested earlier that we have a duty to raise, educate, and orient the Here and Now where one is.[160] This means that contemplation is not sufficient if it does not transform oneself and others. The duty, often observed by silent example, other times by discernfully careful but clear explanation, is to one's fellow persons, especially to those in one's care, to family, students, and the wider community. A similar duty is also owed to oneself, and to what within oneself can be transcended and transformed. As Augustine ([c.390] 1991, 69) says, combining Plato and Plotinus with Christianity, and adumbrating existentialist commitment to transcendence and authentic, responsible self-making:

> Go not abroad. Return within yourself. In the inward man dwells truth. If you find that you are by nature mutable, transcend yourself. But remember in doing so that you must also transcend yourself even as a reasoning soul. Make for the place where the light of reason is kindled.

One has, in this view of self-transformation, an orienting, educational duty to raise oneself as much as to raise others. Plotinus sublimely expresses this, recalling Alcibiades' vision of Socrates' luminous inner beauty, and suggesting what I call the *ars biographica poetica*:

> How then can you see the sort of beauty a good soul has? Go back into yourself and look; and if you do not yet see yourself beautiful, then, just as someone making a statue which has to be beautiful cuts away here and polishes there and makes one part smooth and clears another till ha has given his statue a beautiful face, so you too must cut away excess and straighten the crooked and clear the dark and make it bright and never stop 'working on your statue'[161] till the divine glory of virtue shines out on you, till you see 'self-mastery enthroned upon its holy seat'.[162]
>
> . . . [W]hen you see that you have become this, you have become sight; you can trust yourself then; you have already ascended and need no one to show you; concentrate your gaze and see. (*Ennead* I, 6.9.5-26)

[160] Part Two, Ch.9.
[161] Quoting *Phaedrus*, 252D7, where the lover works on and improves the beloved.
[162] Quoting *Phaedrus*, 254B7.

Understanding this duty of spiritual care to self and surrounding persons raises perennial questions surrounding the philosopher's descent, away from the excellences of contemplation, and back down into the shadows of cave, to enlighten, without reward, one wonders,[163] the eikastic ones who might rather murder, says Plato (*Republic*, Bk. VII, 517a), than be removed from the fascinated condition whose chains they consider their secure relation to the only true world. The philosopher agreeing to turn from the vision of the Good, however, need not lose faith in the eternality of the Good that has now been contemplated, and may descend in good faith that it is both the right thing to do, and that nothing of the supreme vision is diminished in the new descent. As Heraclitus says,

> The road up and the road down are one and the same. (Fragment 69)

Making the descent, then, is to replace outer stillness with inner. Nevertheless, it is admittedly difficult to remove oneself from the theoretic vision in its outwardly still and restful form, and:

> you must not wonder that those who attain to this beatific vision are unwilling to descend to human affairs; for their souls are ever hastening into the upper world where they desire to dwell; which desire of theirs is very natural, if our allegory may be trusted. (*Republic*, 516)

Hence, Plato gives the narrator, Socrates, to say that:

> they must be made to descend again among the prisoners in the den, and partake of their labours and honours, whether they are worth having or not.
>
> But is not this unjust? he [Glaucon, Plato's brother] said; ought we to give them a worse life, when they might have a better?
>
> You have again forgotten, my friend, I said, the intention of the legislator, who did not aim at making any one class in the State happy above the rest; the happiness was to be in the whole State, and he held the citizens together by persuasion and necessity, making them benefactors of the State, and therefore benefactors of one another; to this end he created them, not to please themselves, but to be his instruments in binding up the State.

Fear of descent, or at least reluctance to leave the vision of contemplation, is present also in tales of those Buddhist monks of the Zen and related traditions who have attained *samādhi* (an equanimity preliminary to contemplative insight),[164] perhaps

[163] Although, as Highet (1950, 16) says, 'The strangest and best thing about teaching is that a seed is dropped into what looks like rocky ground will often stick and take root gradually, and spring up years later, sometimes in a bizarre form and oddly hybridized, but still carrying the principle of life.'

[164] See this thesis, 4.1.

on a mountain-top, yet will not walk back down to the village for fear of losing this state. Nevertheless, as Dōgen says,

> Wiping out attachment to *satori,* we must enter actual society. ([1231-53] 2009, Ch. 1, *Genjo koan*)

I find in Alan Watts' view on *satori* (Japanese: enlightenment, awakening, beholding true nature), and its relation to the concentration an educator must elicit, good explanation of why some are loath to descend into the cave to educate the illusion-fascinated, non-contemplative community, and if some of these teachers are compelled nevertheless to descend, they sometimes do so without sufficient kindness:

> what is not understood by many Westerners, and is not understood by many Japanese, is that after so many generations every religion undergoes a change because pious enthusiasts, or priests, send their children to study at a young age. And the children aren't naturally interested, especially adolescent boys, or college-age boys who would rather be over the wall chasing girls. But papa says, 'You go to the monastery!' So they get all these goofing-off boys in the monastery, and they have to put them into order. (Watts, in ed. Monte, 1989, 79)

But those teachers who resort to unkind discipline, or worse, unimaginative exercises that impose a mere appearance of order, are, at best, too afraid to lose the peace and quiet they believe must necessarily and almost constantly be maintained to ensure further contemplation. They as yet lack a certain faith, namely, the confidence that epiphanies can appear in the midst of that seemingly chaotic energy of expression and exploration in which young minds grow. Such teachers and other professionals know the importance of training, but have yet to trust in the assured truth that all persons yearn for spiritual growth, and not only a supposedly elite few. As Huxley (1937, 333) puts it:

> First Shakespeare sonnets seem meaningless; first Bach fugues, a bore; first differential equations, sheer torture. But training changes the nature of our spiritual experiences. In due course, contact with an obscurely beautiful poem, an elaborate piece of counterpoint or of mathematical reasoning, causes us to feel direct intuitions of beauty and significance. It is the same in the moral world.

To Coleridge, we can turn for a further example that, though probably fictional, is analogous to the philosopher's or mantic contemplative's return to the cave. I refer to Coleridge's report of having to attend to the person on business from Porlock, who, he says, interrupted his poetic vision in a dream.[165] Attending respectfully, however, to a

[165] De Quincey (1821) says it was Coleridge's physician, Dr Potter, bringing opium. Whether or not a person actually called on business from Porlock, the episode is part of the poem's *mythos*, and is thus a part of the poem by being included in the prefatory note. I take the note to be of the

person knocking at one's door need not destroy the beauty and goodness of any true vision, despite his preface to the great 'Kubla Khan' poem that he describes as a fragment. Here I quote from the poet's prefatory note:

> On awakening he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter! (*Poetical Works* I.1, 511-2)

Its fragmentary appearance is a part of what is marvellous about 'Kubla Khan': an astonishing work of symbolic imagination that demonstrates and embodies the *poiesis* born of *theoria*. One can freely imagine, I suggest, the elder Coleridge holding forth in his Highgate Circle, influentially enlightening the young minds of London and beyond, as not at all afraid of losing the vision in a dream to answer to the business of everyday life. Rather, such calls to business are calls for inner celebration, being the practical reward of what has been won in contemplation.

In the Zen tradition, the state of *samādhi* (concentrated meditation) is understood to be preliminary, a gradual insight that is tenuous because provisional. Because this ataraxic state is tenuous and provisional, we can easily understand the adherent's reluctance to relinquish it by descending into the dark cave whose inhabitants fear, rather than adore, the bright, clear light. *Samādhi* does not guarantee *satori*, which enlightenment allows one to descend the mountain, walk among the villagers, and participate in daily life while metaphorically remaining a mountain-top contemplative because the vision is calmly and clearly retained without any anxiety of loss felt by a preliminary state.[166]

As Coleridge reflects, in 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison', for the gentle-hearted,

> No sound is dissonant which tells of Life

---

same species of self-referential commentary found in Sterne's Tristam Shandy; Kierkegaard's 'editorial' prefaces and notes to his pseudonymous works; and more common in modernist and postmodernist works, such as the ludicrously long footnotes in some of Flann O'Brien's novels.

[166] To reiterate, *smrti* (mindfulness), borne of concentrated *dhyāna*, is a retention of discerned truths in the present moment that, if cultivated, can overcome the fear of losing the inner treasure of theoretical vision, and can encourage people to share it rather than hide it. For discussion using these terms, see eds Fromm, Suzuki, and De Martino ([1974] 1993, passim, esp. 46-7). Cf. Abe (1985).

and those who confidently contemplate the Good need not lose hope of finding it again in the valley, in the village, or even in the marketplace. In this light, I read new meaning in Swift's parodic account of theoretical scientists at the grand Academy of Lagado, one of whom:

> had been Eight Years upon a Project for extracting Sunbeams out of Cucumbers, which were to be put in Vials hermetically sealed, and let out to warm the Air in raw inclement Summers. ([1726, 1735] 2010, Ch. 5, 199)

Theoretical science condescending to provide such inefficient service to the community may indeed be ludicrous. Nevertheless, the poetic and thus humane value of extracting sunbeams, no less, from cucumbers, and storing them in sealed phials, is wonderful to imagine.

The discerning and faithfully remembering mind, as in Zen Buddhist accounts of *satori*, will nevertheless retain the mountain-top vision through the depths of the cave, so that while performing the work of the Good, the educating philosopher is still, in one sense, on the mountain top, and in that sense has not really left it. The discernful mind, then, sees the sun in all its fruits, even in those earthy, silly cucumbers in the shade, and not only in the glare of the sun itself. Indeed sunlight is most beautiful for us when refracted as rainbows, held in a crystal, diffused through mist or clouds, or reflected, as Cooper (2013) revealingly explores, by the surface of the sea.[167]

Relating to refraction in the cave, Bacon, whom Coleridge calls the British Plato,[168] contrasts (a) the Divine Ideas, which include the Universal Laws that leave their impressions on nature with (b) the Idols of the Tribe (errors, or obstacles to truth, in human nature; of the Cave, on which more below; of the Marketplace (formed by intercourse and association of men); and of the Theatre (errors from the various dogmas of philosophies). Everyone, he writes,

> has a cave or den of his own, which refracts or discolours the light of nature, owing either to his own proper or peculiar nature; or to his education and conversation with others, or to the reading of books, and the authority of those whom he esteems and admires; or to the differences of impressions, accordingly as they take place in a mind preoccupied and predisposed or in a mind indifferent and settled; or the like. So that the spirit of man

[167] Cooper's phenomenological-aesthetic study draws from philosophy East and West and is centrally concerned with aesthetic Idea naturally and expressively found in reflections of sunlight on water. Cf. Cheyne, 2014.

[168] *Friend* I, 488. Coleridge notes differences of style and interest, and that Bacon's is a reverse Platonism of Things not of Words, but also that he is essentially Platonic in his inductive approach to the Laws of Nature, which are for him Living Ideas and objective, universal principles.

> (according as it is meted out to different individuals) is in fact a thing variable and full of perturbation, and governed as it were by chance. Whence it was well observed by Heraclitus that men look for sciences in their own lesser worlds, and not in the greater or common world. (1620, Book One, Aphorism XLII)

That the human spirit is full of perturbation, however, is a contingent, reversible, truth, and it is precisely for the reversal of exactly this spiritual distress that the philosopher must return into the cave. I hope, nevertheless, I have shown reason to be confident that in returning to the cave, the theoretical vision need not be lost, and that the philosopher's descent, refracted and diffused though it will be, brings enlightenment, like sunbeams smuggled in cucumbers, initiating in obscurely illumined minds a longing for and concomitant confidence in a universally comprehending light of reason.

This faith, however, in the hardiness of theoretical vision in the midst of practical engagement is only valid when the contemplative works with a symbolic consciousness that remains able to contemplate its theoretic objects on and through everyday surroundings. This symbolic consciousness allows inner or potential beauty to shine through ordinary objects, and thus cleanse, as Blake instructs, the doors of perception. Without this symbolic awareness, one will naturally be diverted and myopically fascinated into the eddies and rock-pools of practical life. Though not forgetful of the greater theoretic ocean, one will become oblivious that the sounds of the waves, the briny tang, the raspy whiffs of kelp, and the seagull's caws are all signs that one is already there, and one must hold all this meaningful being together rather than allow the discrete parts to disperse one's mind in distractions here and there. As Plotinus says,

> For everything which is directed to something else is enchanted by something else . . . but only that which is self-directed is free from enchantment. For this reason all practical action is under enchantment, and the whole life of the practical man . . . .
>
> Contemplation alone remains incapable of enchantment because no-one who is self-directed is subject to enchantment: for he is one, and that which he contemplates is himself, and his reason is not deluded, but he makes what he ought and makes his own life and work. (*Ennead* IV, 4.43-4)

Making one's own life and work out of contemplation; contemplating, amid practical life, and unenchanted by it: this is what I call the *ars biographica poetica*, a creative discovery sustained in the act of faith.

4.5 Contemplation: Useless and the yardstick of every possible use

A successful expression of aesthetic Idea is compelling. It activates the mind with feelings whose profound import is emotionally and aesthetically meaningful and yet whose significance remains mysterious. Cage (1973, 12) describes music as 'purposeless play', and was careful to explain this as:

> an affirmation of life – not an attempt to bring order out of chaos nor to suggest improvements in creation, but simply a way of working up to the very life we're living.

Music as tone and timbre is capable of expressing aesthetic Ideas to the highest degree. This is because no concepts can be sufficiently adequate to the music, just as no concepts can ever be adequate to the Idea. Thus music in its most aesthetically expressive instances overflows the understanding. The mind is set in motion. The breeze stirs and wafts the leaves. The auditor becomes a poet as long as the mind awakens to the call. The call is heard from within as much as from afar. The poetic call is heard from within, because something profound is recognized which the mind stirs to recall, trace, and reminisce. Thus *anamnesis*, or recollection, is an apt description of the process. The poetic call is heard from afar, because the object stimulating aesthetic attention is something external. In this call, deep calls to deep in the correspondence of Idea to thought.

Cage's understanding of music recalls Kant's criterion of purposiveness without purpose, whereby aesthetic contemplation arises:

> because we meet with a certain finality in its perception, which, in our estimate of it, is not referred to any end whatever. (*CJ*, §17)

Kant regarded instrumental music as one of the few arts exhibiting only free rather than dependent beauty. Free beauty is that which is not dependent on concepts. Thus in the admiration of an abstract sculpture, for example, what is admired are the shapes, textures, and indistinct evocations, rather than a comparison to any particular thing. However, it is here where Kant must part from Cage and Coleridge. For the very reason that instrumental music lacks clear concepts, it must, for Kant, join the ranks of the merely agreeable, and not the fine, arts. Music, as Kant hears it, provides:

> nothing but sensations without concepts, so that unlike poetry it leaves us with nothing to meditate about. (*CJ*, §328)

Contrasting Kant's position, my contemplative position holds that instrumental music does indeed specify nothing to meditate *about*; nonetheless, I argue, it sometimes presents meditation *itself*. Kant has a response to this, however, namely that music:

> nevertheless does agitate the mind more diversely and intensely [than poetry], even if merely temporarily. However, it is admittedly more a matter of enjoyment than of culture (the play of thought that it arouses incidentally is merely the effect of an association that is mechanical, as it were). (*CJ*, §328)

Kant's position regarding the meditation aroused by instrumental music is that thought has merely been agitated by the mechanics of association. Coleridge was both charmed and dismissive (regarding seriousness and meditative depth) of the Aeolian harp as 'music slumbering on her instrument' (and of course, not really music), and equally charmed and dismissive of this instrument's human equivalent, which is a kind of speculative daydreaming, the play of loosely directed Fancy following trains of association. For Kant, instrumental music fits into the same category of the charming yet unimportant, and for him it is because the composition is non-conceptual. This non-conceptual status would, on the other hand, be a merit for Coleridge, with his high evaluation of that which evokes the Ideas beyond the conceptual.

A compelling virtue of instrumental music is that it does not direct the audience, unless it is banal and obvious, regarding the content of what is to be meditated on. Ideally then, instrumental music encourages meditation without intrusion. I argue, from a Coleridgean position, that instrumental music does not merely agitate the mind into meditation, with its mechanical associations, for example, but that it presents, if successful, its own form of meditative mood. This presentation can be accomplished by literal resonance, as in Cage's 'Dream' (1948), or by its use of 'playing the silences', by the use of a rondo form, which creates the contemplative frame and musical form we observed in what Coleridge calls his Meditation Poems. The various meanings of return are conveyed in rhythm and in rhyme, and these meanings are given whether the content be of meaning constructed by verbal description, visual images, or musical tone.

Return can mean repetition, or it can mean a similarity that progresses, or regresses; elevates, or descends. These meanings include notions of advance or regression in life projects, or wisdom, or notions of acceptance, or frustration, and so on. Such foundational meditation, which is not overly concerned about content, or precisely what to think, but attends to how one attends and appreciates, is a foundation of the *ars biographica poetica*. The fundamental meanings of departure and return, and of

expectation and surprise, help comprise our basic comprehension of life, with its necessities and contingencies. These fundamental meanings, which are essentially musical, invite reflection yet they are more basic than any conceptual assertion. The poetic meanings of rhyme and reason are deeper than any concepts of the understanding, which latter require the former as a base.

Such meanings can be conveyed in musical and poetic structure, with elements such as tone, tempo, resonance, and pause adding significant nuances to the meaning. Contrary to Kant, the 'sensations without concepts' in instrumental music allow it the possibility of pure meditative expression, the meaning of which comes directly from the form and nuance of this expression. To the elevation of instrumental music, and not to its denigration, meaning is not dictated in any conceptual progression, for none is presented. No formula can be given to guarantee the presentation of meditative mood in music, just as no formula can be given to guarantee success in any of the fine arts. Nevertheless I have shown that it is possible to approach instrumental music with a view to inquiring into what is meditative in the form that it takes, rather than assuming, as did Kant, that because it is non-conceptual, any meditation it stirs must be merely agitation by mechanical association.

Cage indicates an ideal possibility open to art, whereby directedness remains unconceptualized. Contemplation and the ideas it evokes can be seen as profounder values that are the ground of every possible purpose, and are not themselves purposes. Thus the Platonist neo-Thomist Pieper (1989, 123) says,

> For it is contemplation which preserves in the midst of human society the truth which is at one and the same time useless and the yardstick of every possible use. So it is also contemplation which keeps the end in sight, gives meaning to every practical act of life.'

Pieper's evaluation of contemplation as 'useless and the yardstick of every possible use' sides him with Coleridge, in that Coleridge knows Idea as 'given by knowledge of *its ultimate aim*' (*Constitution,* 12). The beholding in contemplation is thus distinguishable from the grasp of the concept and includes a waking up and attending to the worth and value that gives meaning and point to all possible purposes.

This awakening may be attained through dynamic or still meditation, as in the *ritsuzen*, such as in archery, and *zazen,* sitting meditation, of D*ō*gen's S*ōtō* Zen practice. It may also be attained through the stirring of aesthetic Ideas in the experience of high art. It may even break into ordinary experience, bicycling around a corner, sun warming the skin, reflected in wheel-sprayed puddle water. No concept is adequate to or can

contain the much thought occasioned by the experience of the sublime or the beautiful. Empirical concepts gain in depth and evocative richness by this mental effort, but to reach their mark, to approach their destination, the aesthetic Ideas call upon the Ideas of reason to find their resonance. Through aesthetic Ideas, empirical concepts gain in evocativeness, but their dynamism is a movement towards the rational ideas. Without this compulsion towards the Ideas of reason there would be nothing to be evoked. When an aesthetic Idea does not add to the evocativeness of an empirical concept, it has merely added a cluster of suggestive empirical associations.

This resonance is not the adequation between concepts and phenomena that is the understanding's rightful field of expertise. Poetic resonance involves meaning and appropriateness that is deeply felt, but which operates otherwise and differently from conceptually indicative acts of meaning. The contemplation I am aiming at is not assertoric in the sense of asserting a distal object to have some properties and relations and not have others. It is not a claim to that sort of knowledge. Trying to present poetic resonance, I am drawn to a cluster of metaphors around *anamnesis*. It is not cognizing, but recognizing and 'waking up to the very life we're living'.

The ideal of fine art is in one sense the ideal of Śākyamuni Buddha's Flower Sermon. The white flower is silently held up: a wordless sermon. The disciples are untouched, or perhaps bemused, save one, Mahākāśyapa, who gently smiles. In the Japanese Zen tradition, the story is known as the *nengemisho*, literally 'pick up flower, subtle smile'.[169] Was it reception, or recognition that the disciple who smiled experienced? Both possibilities are contained in the notion of poetic resonance.

The meaning achieved in poetic resonance is fulfilling as ideas are awakened. Unbound, we feel their shimmering, their musical vibration and appropriateness. For Coleridge, as for Plato, an Idea is one, not many. The same Idea in two minds is one, and not two. We may have different concepts according to our different and individual experiences, but if we share an Idea, we share *the same* Idea. Were it not the same Idea, it would be a concept abstracted from particular experiences, and thus, however subtly, different from the next person's concept.

Coleridge maintains that Ideas influence thoughts and actions, and that this happens for most people, most of the time, with neither a distinct consciousness of it nor an

[169] The story is not in the Pali canon, but Suzuki (1961, 60) calls it an important Zen teaching. Harmless's (2007, 192) more recent study suggests that the influential, apocryphal story was probably first told in China by Ch'an Buddhists.

ability ‘to express it in definite words’ (*Constitution*, 12). Art conveying aesthetic Ideas is one way to experience this calling to the Idea. Śākyamuni’s *dharma* transmission of *prajñā* (wisdom) is another, although the term *transmission* does not quite express the reality. Something like ‘intuiting a resonance’ works better, implying more activity on both sides than ‘transmission’ connotes. Only one disciple, after all, acknowledged the lesson.

This resonance is a quiet joy, Cage’s vibration ‘to the very life we’re living’. The preposition *to* in that clause (‘a vibration *to* the very life we’re living’) relates a distance, a two-ness, that is overcome in resonance. In poetic resonance, the mind itself recognizes that it is no secluded island, and that every intimation and felt yearning involves others. Poetic intimations discover their objective reference through resonance. The unplayed violin, when played for the first time, realizes – feels in the resonance – that its secret yearnings and intimations were never secret after all, and were indeed truer and more real than it ever dared to dream.

Zhuangzi (Ch. 27a) relies on resonance to intimate the ineffable in his Daoist writings:

> I have spoken without art, naturally, according to . . . impulse . . . . Preliminary to all discourses, there pre-exists an innate harmony in all beings. From the fact of this pre-exisiting harmony, my speech, if it is natural, will make others vibrate.

The communicative effect that stirs and intimates meaning beyond conceptual description is, for Zhuangzi, a vibration: a poetic resonance. Thus contemplation is of the highest value, not merely in giving rest to conceptual understanding, but to breathe in, to be inspired, and to appreciate the connection and resonance with those profoundest ideas that shape our ends and aims. As Coleridge writes,

> All men live in the power of Ideas which work in them, though few live in their light. (Cited in Muirhead, 1954, 99)

This observation implies that unless we live in the light of Ideas, we are condemned to repeat their inadequate conceptual misapplication. We would, then, be condemned to repeat the same mistakes in unfinished projects urged, like the Freudian return of the repressed, by the repetition compulsion that makes us rewrite episodes in the biographies we write with our lives. The drive to repeat compels us until we live not just under Ideas, but in their light by approaching them. Contemplation brings us to live in their light, however easily we may be called out of it again.

Conceptual activity will interrupt and disturb contemplative activity, much as a visit by a person from Porlock will interrupt and disturb poetic reverie. Contemplative activity is no 'indolent vacuity of thought', yet it must seem so to one who holds the conceptual work of the understanding to be the end and apex of human thinking. I read 'Frost at Midnight' as a positive response, championing contemplative activity, to Cowper's 'The Winter Evening', Book IV of 'The Task'. Cowper recognizes that the play of superstition, which for Coleridge is an act of fancy, provides a well-earned rest for the conceptual thinker.

> 'Tis thus the understanding takes repose
> In indolent vacuity of thought,
> And sleeps and is refreshed.

The play of fancy charms and diverts. Cowper's understanding in repose is like a grandparent who gently smiles, solaced and refreshed, observing grandchildren in innocent play. For him, the purpose of contemplation is negative; it serves the conceptual understanding by giving it respite. The play is innocent, but not nonsensical:

> Meanwhile the face
> Conceals a mood lethargic with a mask
> Of deep deliberation, as the man
> Were task'd to his full strength, absorb'd and lost.

Cowper sees the visage of contemplation as shed skin, the sleep mask of a resting understanding. The mask of seemingly deep deliberation is, for him, merely a surface apparition. It is as if the grandchildren look up from play and fancy to see the elder in serious thought, which is yet, for Cowper, an illusion. While children play horses with brooms, the mature mind is but resting, filling out the vacant with correspondent vacancy.

> Thus oft, reclined at ease, I lose an hour
> At evening, till at length the freezing blast
> That sweeps the bottled shutter summons home
> The recollected powers; and snapping short
> The glassy thread with which the fancy weaves
> Her brittle toils, restores me to myself.

Though contemplation may arise at sparks from fancy's play, its concerns are profound. Its deep deliberation is no mask, and its pursuit is no evening hour lost. In contemplation, everyday concerns crystallize and hold the light with their bestilled form. It is in these contemplative moods that everyday rituals and appearances are revealed for what they preserve. Contemplation amid the everyday takes a sabbatical

form, with the mind not unreflectively engaged with everyday concerns, but appreciating the good that they preserve, which is ordinarily hidden behind the film of familiarity (*Biographia* II, 7). Deeply resonant, contemplation is thus quietly attending, appreciative, and outflowing acknowledgement.

The mind's working towards a quiet epiphany is truly experienced in 'Frost at Midnight'. The fanciful, idle seeking for companionable forms in the play of soot on the fire grate gives way to the circling energies of contemplation proper, taking in its rondo the poet's past and future biography, that of his cradled, sleeping son, and beyond, to acknowledge, in communion, forms of nature interpreted as expressing aesthetic Ideas intimating divinity, meaningful continuity, and peace.

> Whether the eave-drops fall
> Heard only in the trances of the blast,
> Or if the secret ministry of frost
> Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
> Quietly shining to the quiet moon.

In the contemplative movement of his developed meditation, Coleridge, as in Cage's suggestion about music, worked up to the very life we're living. The import of his quiet epiphany is intimately related to the gentle, circular, gathering that develops from meditative experience. This contemplative movement is the musical form of Coleridge's meditative poem. Such movement and development can be heard in the best of Cage's musical compositions. From Coleridge's quiet meditation, 'inaudible as dreams', we turn to 'Dream', Cage's melody for piano.[170]

> Dream (1948) was written for piano, using the rhythmic structure of a dance by Merce Cunningham. The long, unaccompanied melody *creates resonances in itself*, like a *soft and meditative mood* . . . . The work foreshadows minimalism . . . creating a sense of *curving, circular time*, carrying the listener through *organic and celestial landscapes*. (Program Note, Stolarik, University of Texas, November 15th, 2007, italics mine)

This haunting, returning and gathering composition perfectly conveys the soft and meditative mood of contemplation by being itself contemplative. In the sheet music notes, Cage instructs:

> Rubato; Always with resonance; no silence, tones may be freely sustained, manually or with pedal, beyond noted durations.

The movement of the piece, essentially one line of melody, invites, and is, a broadening of perspective. It is as if the circular time it shapes creates a templum at its centre, an

[170] Please listen at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExUosomc8Uc.

encompassed space for beholding. Even the ordinary, when contemplated here, is deep with value, as in Aristotle's account of Heraclitus' visitors, like tourists, wishing to see a profound philosopher in serious meditation, but were then surprised to see him warming by the stove (*On the Parts of the Animals*, I.5, 645a17). Even here in the kitchen, says Heraclitus, encouraging these hesitant visitors over the threshold, gods are present. Coleridge's fireside meditation at the transitional moment of midnight, moves beyond the fanciful toying with the sooty film at the hearth grate. The meditation does not settle into fancy's idle play, but rises up to match the reality, life, and reflection within and without, ultimately to resonate in the Coleridgean symbol of the icicles, 'quietly shining to the quiet moon.'

The rondo returns to the initial mood and setting, in what Coleridge calls a 'rondo and return upon itself'.[171] The thinker, after contemplative journey, now possesses the awakened Idea instead of being obscurely possessed and drawn by its shadows. As Plotinus describes it:

> The man, then, is alone free from enchantment who when his other parts are trying to draw him say that none of the things are good which they declare to be so, but only that which he knows himself, not deluded or pursuing, but possessing it. (*Ennead* IV, 4.44)

Still in awe of the Idea, the thinker may now consciously appreciate and apply it such that the true end is kept in sight. The fascinated thinker in meditation is first in fancy's sway, enchanted, then, crucially, moves through it, to imagination, and thence to contemplate the meaning and potential value of his biography and its ethical significance. This wider social significance redeems his past in gentle remembrance, garnering value even from what might seem merely regrettable when judged only conceptually. This past is related, in the widening, circling movement, to 'the innumerable goings on of life / Inaudible as dreams'. All of this is gathered still further, involving, and giving value and significance, to the poetic, biographic potential of the cradled infant. Ultimately, meditation stirs the contemplative rondo, which returns, gathers, returns, and then stays, as the soul waxes with what it contemplates.

[171] Coleridge's annotated 'Frost at Midnight' in Beaumont's copy of the MS, quoted in *Poetical Works* I.1, 456.

4.6 Concluding Remarks: contemplative practice and Ideas in human life

The theory of imagination achieves fruition with Coleridge, who, to reiterate, sees imagination in its primary and secondary modes. Primary imagination approaches Ideas drawing them down to enrich ordinary life, and secondary imagination, under a greater degree of voluntarily control, creates art capable of a higher aesthetic order. Because in this theory imagination approaches Ideas, I argue that it develops a Platonist, contemplative tradition, and argues for an Ideal source of value intimated by aesthetic productions. In this view, art and also ordinary life are shaped in pursuit of Ideas. The creative goal is not to reflect the obscurity of human understanding and feeling, but to enlighten them. Coleridgean imagination, then, reaches beyond the understanding. It is visionary: conveying life-enhancing Ideas worth striving for; creating entire cultures in trying to recreate, and aesthetically, materially, represent its vision.

Understanding, at its very best, serves imagination as its auxiliary, though it only seldom grasps the importance of the superior vision, and often denies the existence of what it can neither grasp nor or calculate. The medial status of understanding, however, does not make imagination something ultimate. Unlike understanding, imagination, which accepts its status as an approach, does not deny its own medial nature, and can thereby transcend it. Thus when imagination aesthetically conveys meaning by giving Ideas tangible expression, it becomes tinged with the Ideality it transports. It is as if in serving the Idea, imagination reveals its kinship with it. Imagination is inferior to Idea in that the former must approach and discover the latter. Nevertheless, imagination is akin to Idea in that it cannot discover anything without itself being able to create a likeness of that thing, even if what imagination creates is only the accommodating space, the con-templum, able to receive the Idea.

Understanding, in contrast, is a rule-following faculty, and it is a mistake to let it assume the intellectual crown. Indeed, holding up the understanding's concept-manipulating skill as the mind's glory actually hinders intellectual development. This is so because the mind cannot aspire beyond the understanding's medial nature if it is not even recognized. Humility, then, suggests itself as a corrective virtue through which the understanding can accept its subordinate position. This suggestion runs through Kant's three Critiques, which limit the reach and import of the understanding's concepts, and indicate the space necessary for faith to inhabit a world of value, rather than limiting it to a world of facts about appearances. In this axiological space, goodness and beauty

have ultimate meaning in, through, and beyond the world of phenomena and facts, pleasures and inclinations.

Yet this is not to suggest two worlds. I have been careful throughout this thesis to bring speculation back to the principle that the 'world of appearances' is no separate world but is rather the appearance of reality to sense, desire, and understanding. Only in contemplation is reality considered beyond appearance. As the great ascetic sages assert, from Parmenides to Plotinus, and through the Vedantists and the Buddha to Laozi and the Eastern meditatives, ordinary desires are destined not for abiding satisfaction, but for repetition and confusion. It follows from this meditative view that countless ordinary desires are, in fact, diversions from a greater yearning that can only be satisfied with contemplation towards abiding peace.

However, there are those who believe that this ultimate reality, which Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 12, Chs 7 and 9) defines as thought thinking itself (*noesis noeseos*), is reflected in their very selves. After all, if there is anything abidingly real about oneself, then it must partake of reality. This conclusion about the noumenal reality of the self is the starting point of post-Kantians such as Fichte, and especially Schopenhauer, who look hopefully to the self as that which we both are and perceive, and which is thereby our direct access to non-phenomenal reality.

Coleridge is also, I argue, a post-Kantian thinker, but he is more securely placed within the tradition of British Platonism, which tradition he helps to identify. His important break from Kant lies in his theorizing an imaginative access to objective Ideas, rather than, like other post-Kantians, concentrating on the theoretical connections of the Ego to noumenal reality. Nevertheless, this sense of the real, rather than psychological, ego (as Kant distinguishes the in-itself self from the apparent one) is operative in Coleridge. For example, in a paragraph that seems very likely to influence Yeats's 'For Anne Gregory'[172] (his poem for the young woman who wished to be loved for herself alone, and not her yellow hair), he proposes that:

> it is among the mysteries, and abides in the dark ground-work of our nature, to crave an outward confirmation of that something within us, which is our very self, that something, not made up of our qualities and relations, but itself the supporter and substantial basis of all these. Love me, and not my qualities may be a vicious and an insane wish, but it is not a wish wholly without a meaning. (*Biographia* II, 216)

[172] That the passage I quote inspired Yeats to write 'For Anne Gregory' seems even more likely when we remember both how influential Coleridge was on Yeats' thought and verse, and that the water-insect passage, also in *Biographia*, is undeniably the inspiration behind another Yeats poem, 'Long-Legged Fly'.

Consonant with this desire for outward confirmation of our deepest selves' reality, is the imaginative drive towards contemplating the Ideas that: (a) gives Ideas aesthetic expression, and (b) discovers them already expressed in deeply meaningful yet only obscurely understood aspects of our lives and cultures, perhaps in nature too, and certainly in our aesthetic appreciation of it. Coleridge is thus confident that his search for meaning simultaneously discovers and creates because he is confident that in its highest levels, mind is not only active and passive, but that it both passively acts and actively receives.

Accordingly, in this thesis I have presented Coleridge as profoundly concerned with the human search for objective meaning. He thus develops the long tradition of Platonic accounts of that search, and study of his works can therefore revive in modern thinkers a much-needed concern for contemplation. Developing from Coleridge a case for considering contemplation as a fundamental and perennial concern of philosophy, I discern two kinds of mental passivity, one hindering contemplation, the other advancing it.

The kind of passivity Coleridge disparages is the passivity central to French Mechanist and British Empiricist models of mind. This passivity he finds to be reductive and only partially true of no more than the lowest levels of receptive and reproductive mind. My thesis has also indicated a counterbalancing higher passivity praised by Coleridge, one that is a kind of creative discovery. This creative passivity actively attends to Ideas as comprising objective reality. It is creative in anticipating Ideas by providing them with a receptive space, and then by clothing them in aesthetic forms so that Ideas become transmitted as culturally meaningful, transformative powers.

Thus Coleridge argues for the superiority of the unifying 'act of the mind itself, a manifestation of intellect, and not a spontaneous and uncertain production of circumstances' (*SWF* II, 630). Intellect, then, progresses with what he calls a 'leading thought', which 'key note' manifests a 'captain Idea', which is a 'subtile, cementing, subterraneous power' (*SWF* II, 630).

Following Plotinus, Coleridge often employs the imagery of the seed to explain the educational and cultivating role of Ideas. Thus, for example, his clerisy would disseminate, and all genuine creativity is for him an organic growth. The seed, then, is for Coleridge, as for Plotinus, a universal and powerful symbol, a principle of existence, and not just a convenient metaphor. The Idea itself is like the genetic, shaping

information within a seed. The seed with its husk actualized the material and aesthetic conveyance, or dissemination, of the Idea. After the Idea-seed germinates, the plant grows in all directions at once. Roots penetrate into the cultural past for physical security and nourishment. Simultaneously, the stem and leaves strain up for new light, air, and water in the air. And then, 'From the first or initiative idea, as from a seed, successive ideas germinate' (*SWF* II, 633).

This image of the Idea taking root in human life, and making cultures grow in an almost vegetal way is a very apt one. It shows how cultural growth, scientific and artistic, is often not fully conscious, much as Koestler (1959) describes cosmology, from Mesopotamian times to Newton, as developing through a series sleepwalking geniuses. Often, that is to say, the creative mind is scarcely aware of the full import of astonishing discoveries and theories to which they are guided by reason. Thus Coleridge says that:

> The Idea may exist in a clear, distinct, definite form of an accurate geometrician; or it may be a mere *instinct*, a vague appetency toward something which the mind incessantly hunts for but cannot find. . . . In the infancy of the human mind, all our ideas are instincts; and language is happily contrived to lead us from the vague to the distinct, from the imperfect to the full and finished form. (*SWF* II, 633)

To this I add that whereas mere instinct towards Idea is vague and prone to stray with diversions of desire and misconstruals of meaning, in contemplation, thought merges with the Idea contemplated. Like a pool reflecting the sun, contemplation (because calm and still) allows very little of the medium to intervene in the clear vision. In ordinary life, on the other hand, desire, distraction, diversion, association, and so on, disturb the clarity of mind necessary to approach Ideas consciously.

Related to this contrast between (a) chaotic desires propelling associative thought and (b) the clarity of undisturbed contemplation, there is a popular but misconceived notion that the life of the creative artistic or scientific genius may be, perhaps even must be, unkempt and chaotic if it is to produce elegant, cultivating works. Rousseau, for example, abandoned his children to leave him free to educate wealthy parents' children and compose theoretical treatises on the subject. I oppose to this notion the idea of a simple perfectionism that seeks always to develop 'the instinctive approach toward an idea' into a fully reflective, then discerning and contemplative approach. The unkempt, sleepwalking genius indeed produces great works, but often the message tragically fails to convey effectively to the very author, let alone to society at large. Someone, however, whose life and art are in close accord, and fashioned through the same

principles, fashions life itself into the bow that fires creative intellect's arrows. An adept of the *ars biographica poetica* will therefore say with Yeats (1919): 'Hammer your thoughts into unity'!

It is true that important directions and discoveries emerge from instinctive gropings, but the goal is to render this darkness visible, and not to seek its obscurity in order to remain hidden. The contemplative's practical goal is to be a light for others, and not to become hidden again, only this time in a cave of higher altitude then the one just crawled from. To follow the guiding Idea so that culture progresses:

> requires, in short, a constant wakefulness of mind, so that if we wander but in a single instance from our path, we cannot reach the goal, but by retracing our steps to the point of divergency, and thence beginning progress anew. (*SWF* II, 633)

As I have emphasized throughout this thesis, if Ideas are to mean anything to us, they must be discovered in imagination and given aesthetic expression. Thus:

> Events and images, the lively and spirit-stirring machinery of the external world, are like light and air, and moisture, to the seed of the mind. . . . In all processes of mental evolution the objects of the senses must stimulate the mind; and the mind must in turn assimilate and digest the food it thus receives from without. (*SWF* II, 634)

Life, then, is to be perfected in all its aspects, cultivated by Ideas. It must also give back to the cultural soil from which it derived the materials for its own growth and material form. This is to acknowledge the practical value of contemplation, as my thesis' title promises. Contemplation, then, is not just a lone, mountain-top activity, but requires a two-way participation that both sustains itself with natural and artistic beauty and nourishes others by contributing to society.

On this theme of contemplation descending down to earth without disavowing its aim and purpose, I give the last word to Coleridge, who gives persuasive and poetic expression to what I call the active-contemplative life. This beautiful, though hitherto apparently unquoted passage, alludes to Milton's *Paradise Lost* (ll. 742-5). The allusion can be detected in the thematic similarity, i.e. the descent from contemplation, and in the nearness of phrasing. Milton writes:

> . . . from Morn
> To Noon he fell, from Noon to dewy Eve,
> A Summer's day; and with the setting Sun
> Dropt from the Zenith like a falling Star.

The descent is, for Milton, Satanic, and the angel is debarred from Heaven. For Coleridge, however, descent from the highest atmosphere nourishes, rather than forecloses contemplation. He claims, therefore, that:

> The mind that is rich and exuberant in this intellectual wealth is apt, like a miser, to dwell upon the vain contemplation of its riches, is disposed to generalize and methodize to excess, ever philosophising, and never descending to action;—spreading its wings high in the air above some beloved spot, but never flying far and wide over earth and sea, to seek food, or to enjoy the endless beauties of nature; the fresh morning, the warm noon, and the dewy eve. (*SWF* II, 634)

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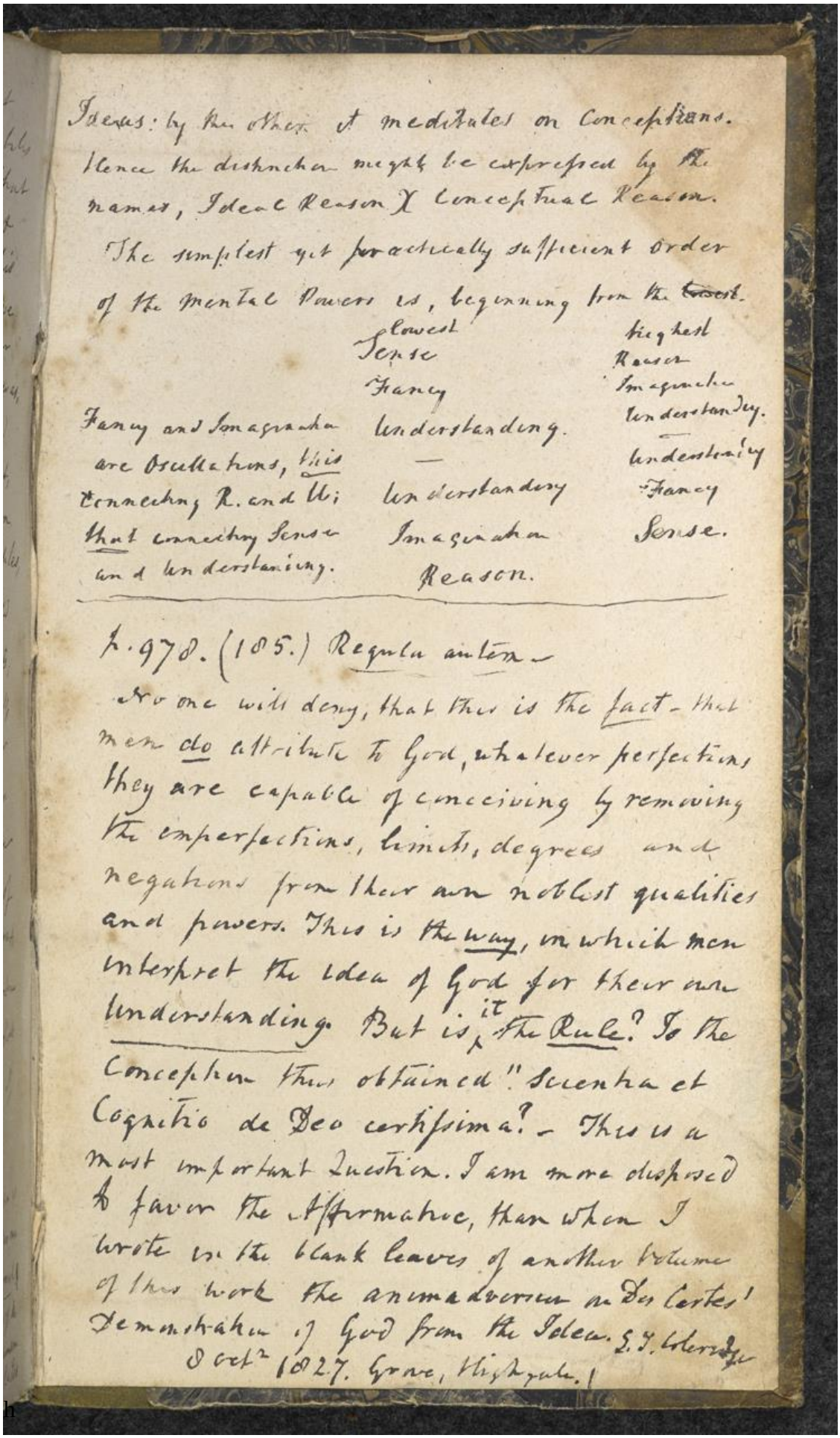
<u>Appendix A</u>: Coleridge's autograph sketch of his System of the Mental Powers



Ideas: by the other it meditates on Conceptions.
Hence the distinction might be expressed by the
names, Ideal Reason & Conceptual Reason.

The simplest yet practically sufficient order
of the Mental Powers is, beginning from the ~~lowest~~.

	lowest	highest
	Sense	Reason
	Fancy	Imagination
Fancy and Imagination	understanding.	understanding.
are Oscillations, this	—	understanding
connecting R. and U;	understanding	Fancy
that connecting Sense	Imagination	Sense.
and understanding.	Reason.	

---

p. 978. (185.) Regula aurea —

No one will deny, that this is the fact — that
men *do* attribute to God, whatever perfections
they are capable of conceiving by removing
the imperfections, limits, degrees and
negations from their own noblest qualities
and powers. This is the way, in which men
interpret the Idea of God for their own
understanding. But is *it* the Rule? Is the
Conception thus obtained "Scientia et
Cognitio de Deo certissima? — This is a
most important Question. I am more disposed
to favor the Affirmative, than when I
wrote in the blank leaves of another Volume
of this work the animadversions on Des Cartes'
Demonstration of God from the Idea. S. T. Coleridge
8 Oct^r 1827. Grove, Highgate.

Appendix B

Meditative Poetry: Coleridge's poetic accounts of meditative experience

This appendix presents an account of contemplation and meditative experience in three of Coleridge's self-styled 'Meditative Poems'. *Sibylline Leaves* (Preface, i), published in the same week as *Biographia* (1817), gathers:

> the whole of the author's poetical compositions, from 1793 to the present date, with the exception of a few works not yet finished, and those published in the first edition of his juvenile poems, over which he has no control.

Sibylline Leaves (163-213) thus groups thirteen 'Meditative Poems in Blank Verse'.[173] I provide philosophical commentary, shaped by the approach of my thesis, to three of these, namely 'The Eolian Harp', 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison', and 'Frost at Midnight'.

I will also look to a fourth poem, 'Dejection: An Ode' for an aesthetic-meditative account of beauty and contemplation. This ode is neither blank verse, nor grouped by Coleridge among his Meditative Poems, but is included here for its relevance to Coleridge's aesthetics. For the reader's convenience, these four poems comprise Appendix C, reproduced from Mays' Reading Text edition (*Poetical Works* I). I select these poems specifically for their meditative form and content, although much of Coleridge's verse throughout his career is meditative in a broader sense.[174] The Meditative Poems, like the Notebooks, help situate his approach to imagination and Idea applied in his poetic thought.

The category Conversation Poems is often given to Coleridge's blank verse, following 'The Nightingale: A Conversation Poem'. This subtitle alludes to Horace's description of his own poetry of daily life and of his gently satirical, reasoning verse as perhaps 'too prosy'. Coleridge uses Horace's original phrase, *Sermoni propriora* (lit. nearer to conversation: *Satires*, 1.4.39) as epigraph to his 'Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement'. Commentators since Abrams often group these poems for thematic reasons, and not only because of their unrhymed iambic pentameter. Calling

[173] Namely, 'Hymn Before Sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouny'; 'Lines Written in the Album at Elbingerode, in the Harz Forest'; 'On Observing a Blossom'; 'The Eolian Harp'; 'Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement'; 'To the Rev. George Coleridge'; 'Inscription for a Fountain on a Heath'; 'A Tombless Epitaph'; 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison'; 'To a Friend, Who had Declared his Intention of Writing no more Poetry'; 'To A Gentleman' (later titled, 'To William Wordsworth'); 'The Nightingale'; and 'Frost at Midnight'. Annotating a copy of *Sibylline Leaves*: 'Let me be excused, if it should seem to others too mere a trifle to justify my noticing it—but I have some claim to the thanks of no small number of the readers of poetry in having first introduced this species of short blank verse poems—of which Southey, Lamb, Wordsworth, and others have since produced so many exquisite specimens.'

[174] As Mays (2013, 179 ff., and passim) argues.

‘The Nightingale’ a Conversation Poem stresses listening with nature, rather than projecting onto it. The sense of conversation as mutual turning cannot have escaped Coleridge. Thus, in conversational turning, his nightingales ‘answer and provoke each other’s songs’. He regrets that poets have emblemized the nightingale as a melancholy bird, likely because:

> some night-wandering man whose heart was pierced
> With the remembrance of a grievous wrong,
> Or slow distemper, or neglected love,
> (And so poor Wretch! Fill’d all things with himself
> And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale
> Of his own sorrow) he, and such as he,
> First named these notes a melancholy strain

Now ‘many a poet echoes the conceit’, when it would be better to stretch ‘his limbs / Beside a brook in mossy forest-dell’ and really listen to ‘the merry Nightingale’ ‘with fast thick warble’ and ‘delicious tones’. Instead, however, the poet and his kind unobservantly, ‘heave their sighs / O’er Philomela’s pity-pleading strains.’[175] Here we take our meditative theme in Coleridge’s poetry, moving beyond projected fancy to the truer listening of contemplation.

Coleridge was celebrated for his trance-like, and often trance-inducing recitation style. Mary Shelley recalls hiding beneath the sofa, frightened and entranced by Coleridge’s recitation of ‘The Rime of The Ancient Mariner’ in her father, Godwin’s, parlour (Montillo, 2013, 13-17). Coleridge can sometimes embody the mantic poet before whom one closes one’s eyes in holy dread. This mood prepares for, and is sufficient but not itself necessary for, imaginative contemplation, and is:

> that willing suspension of disbelief, which constitutes poetic faith. (*Biographia* II, 6)

This poetic mood inaugurates a *con-templum*, much as Heidegger (‘The Origin of the Work of Art’, ed. Krell, 1999, 139-212), inspired by Hölderlin, understands the work of art as what he calls a propriative event that frames and makes possible the appearance of certain truths. Such artworks are world-opening, culturally resonant and formative, in that they allow possibilities to be seen, and provide the necessary moods in which such appearances can become manifest. One of Heidegger’s examples is the Greek temple in the rock-cleft valley:

[175] Philomela: the mythical Athenian princess whose tongue was excised after her rape. She metamorphosed into a nightingale, explaining the muteness of the female and the plaintive, to some, song of the male.

> By means of the temple, the god is present in the temple. This presence of the god is in itself the extension and delimitation of the precinct as a holy precinct . . . Standing there the building rests on rocky ground . . . holds its ground against the storm raging above it and so first makes the storm itself manifest in its violence. . . . The temple's firm towering makes visible the invisible space of air. . . . Tree and grass, eagle and bull, snake and cricket first enter into their distinctive shapes and thus come to appear as what they are. . . . The temple-work opens up a world and at the same time sets this world, which only thus emerges as native ground back again on earth . . . The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves. (Heidegger, ed. Krell, 1999, 167-8)

Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' chants the culturally world-forming power of poetry in similar terms, which that poem itself both embodies and conjures. In the following poems, however, I will trace the forms and content of meditation leading to contemplation in four gentler, sometimes domestic, poems by Coleridge. These poems, in their more domestic elements, can be aligned with Heidegger's example of the humble but radiantly world-opening peasant shoes by Van Gogh insofar as they reveal truths of lived worlds. More than this, however, and transcending Heidegger's point about revealing life-worlds, meditative poetry succeeds when it enhances and frames life with values that transcend its material and particular expression. It is this transcendence, which we will explore in the following, that contemplative poetry makes resonate through its sensuous expressions.

I read the following poems as the acts and expressions of meditative practice moving into contemplation. It is hardly surprising to find in these compositions the poetic presentation of aesthetic Idea. Here we find the secondary imagination communicating and augmenting the primary imagination's construction of value-intimating experience that shimmers with beauty – the transcendence that overflows ordinary, concept-led experience. In these Meditative Poems, the poet moves beyond self-concentrated egocentrism and its fancies, through meditative experience, and circles towards the contemplative beholding of value and resonant meaning.

i. The Eolian Harp[176]

'The Eolian Harp' was first composed in 1795 and titled 'An Effusion'. In the next year, it was expanded and first published, in *Poems on Various Subjects*, as 'Effusion XXXV'. In its mature, 1817 form, which adds to its tranquil musings the 'one Life' vision (ll. 26-9), it is a good place to begin examining different kinds and stages of

[176] I will refer mainly to the *Sibylline Leaves* (1817) version of this Meditation Poem, used in *Poetical Works* I (233), and reproduced in Appendix B, below. When quoting Coleridge, I use his spelling, otherwise I spell it *Aeolian*.

meditative experience in Coleridge's verse. Indeed this poem is one of the aforementioned thirteen 'Meditative Poems' he groups in a chapter of *Sibylline Leaves*.

Although 'Eolian Harp' reaches a higher vision, the one Life epiphany, Coleridge presents the poem's predominant experience as harmless speculation pushed on by fancy. In fact, in a philosophical lecture of 1819 he recalls this poem's initial composition, twenty-four years earlier, and how he mused on:

> the bodily world being the result even as the tone between the wind and the Eolian harp I remember when I was yet young this fancy struck me wonderfully (*Phil. Lects* II, 851)

The poem describes a lazy tranquillity allowing,

> Full many a thought uncalled and undetained

including,

> Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
> on vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring.

The Aeolian harp is a musical instrument, or at least a sound art device, that is pre-tuned, and is left by an open window, or outdoors, to be played by the wind. It produces delicate, flowing, otherworldly sound, uncannily music-like yet through no direct human effort. The instrument can represent, as it sometimes does for Coleridge, an incomplete, merely mechanical mind, such as that Empiricism conceives, incapable of producing genuine poetry. In a marginal note to Kant's First Critique, Coleridge writes,

> The mind does not resemble an Eolian Harp, nor even a barrel-organ turned by a stream of water, conceive as many tunes mechanized in it as you like—but rather, as far as Objects are concerned, a violin, or other instrument of few strings yet vast compass, played on by a musician of Genius. (*Marginalia* III, 248, c.1801)

The poem presents a recumbent poet musing as his fancy plays:

> And thus, my Love! as on the midway Slope
> Of yonder Hill I stretch my limbs at noon
> Whilst through my half-clos'd eye-lids I behold
> The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main.
> And tranquil muse upon Tranquility

The innocent speculation, the 'idle flitting phantasies' of his 'indolent and passive' mind, then begins to muse:

> And what if all of animated nature
> Be but organic harps diversly fram'd,

> That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps,
> Plastic and vast, one intellectual Breeze,
> At once the Soul of each and God of all?

Writers such as McFarland (1969, see esp. 166-8) read into these lines the poet idly spinning an animistic pantheism.[177] In this stanza for them, the transcendent Deity of Christianity becomes a Spinozistic immanent, animating principle. This reading becomes much less tenable, however, when we appreciate that the idea expressed here derives from Cudworth, the Cambridge Platonist and theist. Cudworth writes, employing the phrase 'plastic nature', which he uses several times in his *True Intellectual System of the Universe*, that:

> Mind and understanding is the only cause of orderly regularity, and he that asserts a plastic nature asserts mental causality in the world; but the fortuitous mechanists, who, exploding final causes, will not allow mind and understanding to have any influence at all upon the frame of things can never possibly assign any cause of this grand phenomenon, unless confusion may be said to be the cause of order, and fortune or chance of constant regularity; and, therefore, themselves must resolve it into an occult quality. Nor, indeed, does there appear any great reason, why such men should assert an infinite mind in the world, since they do not allow it to act any where at all, and therefore most needs make it to be in vain. ([1678] 1975, I, 234)

Read as Coleridge contemplating Cudworth's Platonism, the 'Plastic and vast, one Intellectual Breeze' of 'The Eolian Harp' becomes a speculation on Platonic Ideas as true final causes in an universe where intellect appears not by fortuitous accident but as its very structure, although Coleridge was fascinated by Spinozean pantheism, he could not assent to it and what he saw as its ultimate atheism despite Spinoza's 'Deus sive Natura' explanations. Explaining how his own distant admiration of Spinoza reconciles with his rejection of it, he writes:

> Not one man in ten thousand has goodness of heart or strength of mind to be an atheist. And, were I not a Christian . . . I should be an atheist with Spinoza . . . . This, it is true, is negative atheism; and this is, next to Christianity, the purest spirit of humanity. (*Letters*, to Thomas Allsop, c.1820)

At ease with his gentle and attractive musings, he is carried away with imaginative insight:

> O! the one Life[178] within us and abroad,
> Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
> A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
> Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where—

[177] McFarland (1969, fn.168) also sees an allusion to Leibniz in Coleridge's 'one Intellectual breeze'.
[178] See *Ennead* VI, 5.12.1: 'How then is it [Form] present? As one life [*hos zoe mia*]'.

> Methinks, it should have been impossible
> Not to love all things in a world so fill'd;
> Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
> Is Music slumbering on her instrument.
>
> (ll. 26-33)

These lines on the one Life he adds, as errata, to the *Sibylline Leaves* version (1817). The one Life is the literally energetic, imaginatively expressed Idea of Pythagorean harmony and a synaesthetic, cosmic resounding, inspired and exemplified by a wind harp's chords. This inserted passage contrasts panpsychism with the conception of a passive, inanimate nature that needs animating from without, just as the instrument requires a breeze.

Less than a year before adding these sublimely poetic lines, Coleridge writes of what I call a redemptive process in intellectual and spiritual life, the process I describe as *ars biographica poetica*, the joyous task of poetizing life. For Coleridge:

> whatever of good and intellectual Nature worketh *in* us, it is our appointed task to render gradually our own work. For all things that surround us, and all things that happen unto us, have . . . all one common final cause: namely, the increase of Consciousness, in such wise, that whatever part of the terra incognita of our nature the increased consciousness discovers, our will may conquer and bring into subjection to itself under the sovereignty of reason. (*Statesman's Manual*, 89)

We may read, then, the *Sibylline Leaves* version of 'The Eolian Harp' as the poetry of redemptive, expanding consciousness: expanding because awakening, and hence able to take into itself the nature within and without, so that it can sing and not only be sung.

'The Eolian Harp' sings beautifully of a blissful life that is so generous in its sympathies and so spontaneous in its joys that it cannot help recognizing blessedness, life, and joyance everywhere, such that in this Romantic vision nothing is inanimate. The four lines added in an errata slip to *Sibylline Leaves*, from 'O! the one Life' to 'joyance everywhere', were composed around the time Coleridge was giving his *Philosophical Lectures*, and in one of these he expands on the one Life vision found in joy:

> In joy individuality is lost . . . To have a genius is to live in the universal, to know no self but that which is reflected not only from the faces of all around us, our fellow creatures, but reflected from the flowers, the trees, the beasts, yea from the very surface of the sands of the desert. (*Phil. Lects*, 179)

This is an eminently attractive vision of things, providing release from the alienation of the encroaching machine age. Coleridge's poetic vision vibrates between being fascinated by illusory *maya* and a reposeful sitting that may delight in the appearances,

but is free from fascination because it never accepts appearances as ultimate reality. A year after the poem is first published, Coleridge writes in a letter of how the reverie accompanying his conception of Indian meditation holds a particular charm over him:

> at other times I adopt the Brahman Creed & say—it is better to sit than to stand, it is better to lie than to sit, it is better to sleep than to wake—but Death is the best of all!—I should much wish, like the Indian Vishna, to float about along an infinite ocean, cradled in the flower of the Lotos, & wake once in a million years for a few minutes—just to know that I was going to sleep a million years more. (*Letters* I, 209, 14th October, 1797)[179]

This view, for Coleridge the Brahman's creed, he finds charming but ultimately untrue, although twenty-one years later he finds in this charm a transcendence in immanent immediacy that he describes as the 'sensual Cosmotheism of the Hindoos' (*Marginalia* V, 769, c. 1818).[180] By 1821, translating A. W. Schlegel's German rendering of a *Gita* passage, he finds the 'eighth incarnation of Krishna or Vishnu, as Man' to be 'a *poetic* Symbol', and likens the Gita's poetic expression through myth to Plato, and: 'Many an earnest truth has Plato taught mythically' (*Notebooks* 4, 4832).

Regarding his higher view, superior to floating about and being cradled, he says:

> It is but seldom that I raise and spiritualize my Intellect to this height (*Letters* I, 209)

He exemplifies the higher view with lines 38-43 from 'This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison', a poem I discuss below. This position of raised and spiritualized intellect, superior to what he sees as a meditative but stupefied state, is one in which sense swims, silent, while gazing round, and Divinity shines in and through the appearances. I will discuss this epiphanic state below, when addressing meditation in 'This Lime-Tree My Prison'.

Coleridge continues to associate with Brahmanism the meditative state of reverie, prominent in 'The Eolian Harp', wherein fledgling thoughts are called but undetained as 'Bubbles that rise and glitter as they break'. In 'The Night-Scene', a dramatic fragment from 1800-1, he writes,

> Oh! there is a joy above the name of pleasure,
> Deep self-possession an intense repose.

---

[179] Cf. These lines from Coleridge's five-act tragedy *Remorse* (1813), a revision of *Osorio*, written sixteen years earlier in 1797:

> It were a blessed lot in some small skiff
> Along some ocean's boundless solitude
> To float forever with a careless course
> And think myself the only being alive! (IV.iii)

[180] For more of Coleridge's notes on Indian religion, see *Marginalia* (II, 339-49) to DUBOIS.

No other than as eastern sages paint,
The God, who floats upon a Lotos leaf;
Dreams for a thousand ages; then awakening,
Creates a world, then smiling at the bubble,
Relapses into bliss.
(*Poetical Works* II, 655, ll. 50-6)

The Brahmanic vision, if we may thus call Coleridge's notion of meditative reverie, is a middle state between perceiving phenomena as the fixed and definite facts that are the only realities (as the unenlightened understanding of the Empiricists would have it) and the *natura naturans* view that sees through the phenomena, as through a translucency, and towards their non-phenomenal Ideas and Laws. The inserted lines, addenda to the *Sibylline Leaves* version,[181] about 'the one Life' rise to a joyful *natura naturans* view, from a meditative vision of interfused *natura naturata*.

This middle, meditative view is higher than the empirico-mechanical view of 'the universe itself . . . [as] an immense heap of little things' (*Letters* I, 209), i.e. mere matter with each object discrete from every other. This spirited, meditative view is lower, nevertheless, than the contemplative, noetic vision, or its more joyful aesthetic counterpart presented as 'the one Life within us and abroad'. The one Life vision is an infused state, less purely intellectual, because more imaginative and thus capable of seeing – not just intellectually, but feelingly – the Ideal in and through the sensual. My point here, that meditation in 'The Eolian Harp' rises to aesthetically-rich, imaginative contemplation with the 'one Life' addition, echoes Abrams's (1972, 474) succinctly expressed realization that:

> in the lines added in 1817 the poet breaks through sensation to vision.

The one Life vision rises, therefore, from what I call the middle view, which Coleridge associates with Brahmanism, and sees as beautiful, but not quite ultimate truth. Developing this notion of contemplative *theoria* as arising from meditative tranquillity conforms to a central aim of my thesis, which is to show that although meditation does not necessarily lead to contemplation, it is necessary for it, and is thus an intermediate intellectual or spiritual state. Meditation as a middle view sees all phenomena as interconnected, flowing, beautiful and evanescent. This view is described as flowing, as it certainly does in 'The Eolian Harp', from a unitary source beyond all phenomena.

[181] Commentators on the added 'one Life' lines usually say they were added in the Errata, and this is what publishers usually call the slip inserted after the front cover, but added lines of poetry cannot be properly called errata, so I say 'addenda'.

Bliss notwithstanding, such meditation cannot provide an ultimate view, as it also produces illusion, the transitory 'Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break'. Returning, in 1820, to this thought of meditative ease and the kind of lazy metaphysics it suggests, he notes, on reading a history of Indian Philosophy, that the account leaves 'the main problems unsolved & unsolvable' since 'the passage from the Infinite to the Finite' is 'a mere Bubble of words and contradictions in a Scheme which makes God all, and all God' (*Notebooks* 4, 4737).[182]

Thus one can find equanimity in this view, which provides rest from busy cares. It finds an immensely valuable and Ideal source behind all phenomena and manifestations. But it remains an incomplete, medial perspective in that it fails to find solemn reason for cherishing and nurturing material nature, which it ultimately sees as illusory bubbles, however glisteningly attractive.

Thus after imagining his beloved Sara gently reproaching his idle, speculative fantasies, he praises his incomprehensible God who heals with saving mercies. The higher view, then, for Coleridge, is a redemptive one that not only loves the beauty of phenomena, but loves and cherishes their very being, a being which is illusory when considered as the *maya* that sways our reveries. And thus Coleridge humbles his own mind, bursting the bubble of his pleasant reverie to find joy above pleasure. He finds himself:

> A sinful and most miserable man
> Wildered and dark,

but one nevertheless redeemed and loved, and given:

> . . . to possess
> Peace, and this Cot, and thee, heart-honoured Maid!

These realities are to be cherished and humbly appreciated, not calmly judged at a distance through half-closed drowsy lids as ultimately non-existent apparitions.

To reiterate, the view that 'The Eolian Harp' rises from is a middle view, already above the *natura naturata* way of seeing things. Interpreted as *natura naturata*, natural phenomena become fixities and definites in the understanding, analysing experience into separable units. Thus Coleridge opposes his holistic, organicist approach to the reductionism he sees as prevalent in his day. An application of this approach is seen in

[182] Referring to an article by Sanskrit scholar Sir William Jones. Cf. Riem Natale, 2005, and Harries, 2013, on Coleridge's reading of Sir Charles Wilkins' (1785) translated *Bhagvat Geeta*, and other writings on Indian Philosophy, such as Maurice's (1795) *History of Hindostan*.

Heidegger's taking the interpretive, situated, already significant experience as primary, and the analytic attitude to experiential basics as derived from and secondary to the situated experience. In fancy, for Coleridge, phenomena are imaged as counters to be manipulated, whereas the one Life passage replaces passivity with an active principle, the Idea: Life, within us and abroad. The ideal correspondence of subject and object produces:

> Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where.

The imaginative passage settles down, nevertheless, reverting to the unhurried fancy of 'Music slumbering on her instrument.'[183]

'The Eolian Harp' presents an ornamental flight of fancy, not a genuine contemplative experience. For Coleridge, a flight of fancy will always result in a false image, which may be used for good or ill to enhance literary effect. In this case the tranquil result is a fanciful Spinozistic panpsychism. Acknowledging the detrimental effect of such indolence, the poet allows himself to be cut short by his 'pensive Sara', whom he imagines would not approve these unchristian musings:

> But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
> Darts, O belovéd Woman!

The 'idle and flitting phantasies' traversing his 'indolent and passive brain' critically exemplify Newtonian materialism and Lockean Empiricism, which construe the mind as 'always *passive* – a lazy Looker-on' (*Letters*, to Thomas Poole, 23 March, 1801). Coleridge syncretizes this empirical model of mind into the lower, mechanical strata of his own system, which is in part empirico-mechanical but *in toto* active and creative. This lower mind passively and mechanically produces phantasies:

> As wild and various, as the random gales
> That swell and flutter on this subject Lute.
> (ll. 43-4)

ii. Frost at Midnight

[183] See Hamilton, 2007. Hamilton wonders whether the Aeolian harp produces music; it is, nevertheless sound art, as the instrument is produced for that purpose: 'The wind-powered Aeolian harp produces tones without direct human agency, though the sound-producer itself is created intentionally, and it is doubtful whether the result is music. Indeed, the form/matter distinction breaks down here, as elsewhere, if pressed hard enough.' The wind harp does not quite make music, although there is artistic intention using sound. Music is here slumbering, as Coleridge says.

‘The Eolian Harp’s ‘passive and indolent’ speculation contrasts with ‘Frost at Midnight’, which aims at, and achieves a gentle and encompassing contemplation. Here the poet takes no ironic, distanced stance from his own thoughts, but instead authentically follows his imaginative, synthesizing meditation. This meditation spirals from his country cottage fireside chair in winter; back to his childhood at a London school ‘pent mid cloisters dim’, the only natural sight a patch of sky; then forward, to ‘the lakes and shores / And mountain crags’ of the Lake District.

The poem was composed in his Nether Stowey cottage, below Somerset’s Quantock Hills. He therefore anticipates the Lake District described to him by Wordsworth, where his babe, Hartley Coleridge, would indeed grow up. In these yearned-for surroundings his son will ‘see and hear / The lovely sounds intelligible / Of that eternal language, which thy God / Utters’. The meditation then spirals back, gaining insight from his own nature-deprived yet hopeful past. Circling to the future, he prayerfully envisions his son’s natural and spiritual development in the Lake District. Finally the meditation returns to the present, his babe slumbering in the cot beside him, and the icicles in the eaves,

> Quietly shining to the quiet moon.

In ‘Frost at Midnight’, the poet is not content to visit a childhood sad scene, but rather folds this episode and mood into a greater movement, winning a life-affirming confidence and sense of wonder. The nature in the poem’s symbols is *natura naturans*, nature naturing, described as ‘that eternal language’. He conveys not what nature has made, but a sense of the nature’s *logos*, its ways and deeper laws. The focus is thus on the making rather than the made, the process rather than the products. Here ‘clouds image in their bulk / Both lakes and shores and mountain crags’, suggesting a symbol for Coleridgean symbolism itself. As the clouds image the geography below, they are a more transient part of the geographical scene. This echoes the way of the symbol, whose particular images represent the universal of which they are consubstantial. The symbol can therefore represent those Ideas that are its own laws, and excite more thought concerning them.

I find in the poem the highest symbol of the source of life on earth: the sun, whose light is unspoken in the poem, yet radiates, is reflected, and then shines back to its source. There is in ‘Frost at Midnight’, then, an unspoken allusion to Plato’s simile of the sun and the Idea of the Good, to which intellectual light all mind is indebted, and the

debt is repaid by contemplative return of all glory and honour. The unspoken sun in the poem illuminates the mediating moon that reflects sunlight to that half of the earth otherwise bereft of light. The light, then, symbolizes the Ideas of reason, and the sun the Idea of the Good, which for Coleridge is the Divine Idea: God.

Nine years after composing 'Frost at Midnight', Coleridge writes with soul-stirring insight of the moon's symbolizing a dependence on reflected light for principled, practical guidance and for enlightening contemplation:

> like the moon with all its massy shadows and deceptive gleams, it yet lights us on our way, poor travellers as we are, and benighted pilgrims. With all its spots and changes and temporary eclipses, with all its vain halos and bedimming vapors, it yet reflects the light that *is* to rise on us, which even now is *rising*, though intercepted from our immediate view by the mountains that enclose and frown over the vale of our mortal life. (*Friend* I, 97)

Quietly contemplating Ideas of reason, we are enlightened. It follows from my interpretation that the mediating moon symbolizes the imagination that reflects otherwise invisible light to illumine our midnight. The icicles then, quietly shining to the quiet moon, reflect back to, and therefore symbolically reflect on, the moon. Sometimes the snow-water drips from the eaves of our homes to nourish the soil. At other times, it is held in silent icicles, and may thus, as translucent beauty, nourish the soul. Thus the icicles of the poem are a poetic symbol for the translucent aesthetic symbol itself, which creates a sensuous form so that the light of the contemplated Ideas of reason (and ultimately the Idea of the Good) may be resonantly felt, and in that enlightened feeling the Idea may be contemplated for its own supreme beauty and goodness.

Nature in 'Frost at Midnight' is no collection of static harps awaiting a pantheistic spirit to blow into them the impression of life. Nature here is an active principle, forming the natural scenes by being their law, and promising to formatively guide the sleeping babe. The poem meditates nature as power, the Ideas behind phenomena, and participatory symbols reflecting quiet, contemplative prayer. The stillness and gentleness of this meditative mood is also very much the mood concluding another Meditative Poem, 'To William Wordsworth', composed the night he heard his friend recite 'The Prelude':

> Scarce conscious, and yet conscious of its close
> I sate, my being blended in one thought
> (Thought was it? Or aspiration? Or resolve?)
> Absorbed, yet hanging still upon the sound –

And when I rose, I found myself in prayer.

While the forms of nature naturing resonate with poetic imagination proper, fancy is represented in 'Frost at Midnight' as the poet finding his gaze charmed by the filmy play of soot on the hearth. Fancy animates these shadowy images as companionable forms. The:

. . . idling Spirit
By its own mood interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself
And makes a toy of Thought.

The idling spirit of the poet is then transported, by fancy's association, back to memories of schooldays at Christ's Hospital. Here,

in the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,

he:

saw nought lovely but the sky and stars

Homesick pupils believed that the sooty hearth film's puny flaps and freaks presaged a friendly visitor. Thus Coleridge, waiting on the hearth's midnight-dancing forms, recalls lonely schooldays fancifully hoping that the fire-grate shapes, the strangers, predict a visit from his sister.

In this masterfully comprehensive passage, the fanciful thought broadens into imagination's more significant work, and the lonely boyhood memory is comprehended into the larger pattern of life reflected on and contemplated. Thus the poet's lonely London pupillage transforms from snag of sadness into a meaningful part of the whole mind's meditation, involving his past, present, the next generation's future, as his babe slumbers in the fire-warmed cot.

In the meditative spiral, after recalling his boyhood yearning for soothing things, he can say that:

thou my babe! Shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou hear
The lovely shapes and sound intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.

In Platonic terms, the play of fancy before the hearth film is *eikasia* fascinating and captivating the idling Spirit. In contrast, the contemplation of 'the lovely shapes and sounds intelligible / Of that eternal language' is *noesis*, which is to *eikasia*'s enchanting speculation as light is to shadow and reality to reflection.

The meditation's comprehensive spiralling poetizes life. Beginning with the present, adult meditation, retrieving his boyhood, yearning self, both move to a future promising aesthetic fulfilment through freedom in nature. The meditation then comprehends his life, concerns, and relations *sub specie aeternitatis,* intimating the values of the true, the good, and the beautiful. The abstruser musings develop into meditation, rise above fanciful associations and fixated recollections, to achieve a contemplation that finds depth and import for the values signified by imaginatively composing life as poetry.

Around him now; behind him in associated memories; and before him in hope, life is poetized. Life's episodes and higher purposes are reassessed in the broadened, deepened comprehension of the meditation pursued into contemplation. Value arises from contemplation, felt in the beauty and moral sense evoked. While light-hearted meditation can become fancy's light-headedness, meditation seriously attained opens a space for beholding value, that is, it creates a *con-templum*. Holding open this space is a steady act of appreciative attention, freed from fancy's streams of association. Coleridge relates that,

> Metaphysics is a word that you, my dear Sir! are no great friend to / but yet you will agree, that a great Poet must be, implicitè if not explicitè, a profound Metaphysician. He may not have it in logical coherence, in his Brain & Tongue; but he must have it by *Tact* / for all sounds, & all forms of human nature he must have the *ear* of a wild Arab listening in the silent Desart, the eye of a North American Indian tracing the footsteps of an Enemy upon the Leaves that strew the Forest—; the *Touch* of a Blind Man feeling the face of a darling Child. (*Letters* II, 808)

Contemplative attention intensifies, turning inward. Irradiated by reason, the senses become translucent with it, straining for the meaning given in the direction of higher purposes in the material of sense, vibrating the ends of our antennae. David Ward notes that:

> Coleridge uses the word 'Tact' here in a way very close to its original sense of *tactile* sensation. Thus, the deepest feelings and the deepest truths must be mediated through something he would call 'Tact' or 'Touch'; for Coleridge the nearest approach to the commonality of sensuous experience, with a seamless continuity between sense apprehension, poetics and metaphysics . . . this quality [is] . . . more a matter of *affect* than *percept*, something anterior to *concept*, an imaginative response to experience rather than an argument (Ward, 2013, Ch. 1)

Feelings corresponding to the deepest truths are in one sense, as Ward says, anterior to concept, yet while serving an imagination that enlists them to strain towards Ideas, they resonate with something posterior to concept, intimating, that is, an important sense of the praeter-conceptual. This sense, however, is indirect, because mediated by the imagination stirring and semi-enlightening it with symbols, transforming obscure feeling into illumined, aesthetic sense, still dim but now translucent. What this Tact or Touch strains to reach and hence be affected by exceeds purely conceptual grasp. Therefore,

> We can no more *understand it* than we can *taste* or *smell* a conception of the understanding (*Notebooks* 5, 1830)

However, because sense is in polar harmony with reason, aesthetically conveyed Ideas may resonate with there, and reason may nourish the understanding from this circuitous route so that understanding may begin to feelingly understand. This is, nevertheless, a sluggish and murky access to bedimmed reason, and if remaining at this level produces, to borrow Coleridge's phrase:

> snails of intellect, who *see* only with their feelers. (*Notebooks* I, 328, December 1797)[184]

Such feeling-centered, dimly-understanding states of mind guide conduct by aesthetic sense and inclination. While they might have recourse to popular sayings such as 'Charity begins at home', and 'Everyone is entitled to their her opinion', thought is mainly absent or very dim, and this wallowing obscurity proceeds almost entirely by feeling and the popular notion of going with the flow. Although all are bound to lose their way sometimes, in this state one is bound to lose one's way in the same way, repeatedly.

By contrast, intense concentration can be trained in outwardly directed, meditative practices, developing sensitivity to change, import, and nuance in outer phenomena. Such concentration therefore educates dim, feeling-centred comportment, and is the deepest sense of aesthetic education that I so far can fathom. Returning to Coleridge for illustration, contemplation as a stretching to hear, whether in appreciating outer music, or straining for inner focus, is conveyed in another Meditative Poem, 'Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement':

[184] Referring specifically to materialist philosophers, so I use his phrase differently.

> Unearthly minstrelsy! then only heard
> When the soul seeks to hear; when all is hushed,
> And the heart listens!

He suggests that one can only prepare for the object of contemplation with a corresponding mood and appropriate silence. This suggestion reappears in the twentieth century with Rudolf Otto's phenomenology of the holy, arguing that the sacred can only be revealed in the numinous state of the *mysterium tremendum* (Otto, 1923), a state, that is of fear mingled with fascination before something wholly other that touches one's innermost self. Otto addresses the irrationality that marks the irreducibly qualitative aspects of our moods. By responding to situations with their feeling tones, moods relate to the rational, i.e. that which can be logically explicated, without the mood itself being reducible to rational conception. For Otto, the Idea of the divine (the *numen*) translates feelingly into awe.

Because moods are irreducibly qualitative, conceptual accounts cannot convey their experience, even though the experiences can be defined. That is, we can create definitions to describe what awe, say, is and is not, but the definitions are utterly incapable of conveying awe. One reason for this is that some moods and similar states are necessarily responses to something external. Reading about a shark attack, for example, can conjure thoughts and images with which one may work up a sense of fear. The alarm, panic, and intense sensations of the genuine encounter, however, will be missing, and these are essential to the real experience. Joy, or any mood, can be similarly analysed, insofar as the qualitative, irrational and irreducible aspects of moods remain essential to them.

Calling moods irrational here does not mean that they are meaningless or inappropriate. Psychologists, for example, call phobias irrational, such that a fear of house spiders is understood as irrational because the response of fear is inappropriate: there is no reason to fear the tiny, harmless arthropod. This is not what I mean, however, by the irrational element in mood. I mean, rather, a quality irreducible to ratio, so that the something felt cannot be rationally conveyed by a system dependent on signification by arbitrary signifiers, i.e. by language, its words and its concepts.

Otto's numinous is a:

> non-rational, non-sensory experience or feeling whose primary and immediate object is outside the self.

Similarly, considering one's life from the aspect of 'the one Life within us and abroad'; comprehensively viewing present, past, and future; and evaluating events and meanings in terms of Ideals transcending the phenomena that compose the events' outward forms, are three possibilities revealed in contemplative experience in which imagination brings Ideas of reason to bear on the meaning of life.

The secret ministry of frost hanging up silent icicles quietly shining to the quiet moon images the symbol as neither opaque, nor transparent, but as translucent. It holds and reveals the light it symbolizes, without the light being either occluded, or so transparent that it is not seen as light. The secret ministry of frost represents the luminous quiet of transformative, contemplative experience. The melted snow-water crystalizes, and then shines with the light it holds. The secret ministry represents the oft-unnoticed working of the symbol, which usually operates below self-consciousness, so that:

> It is the privilege of the few to possess an Idea: of the generality of men, it might be more truly affirmed that they are possessed by it. (*Constitution*, 13)

In *Reflection*, Coleridge distinguishes his symbol presenting Idea in nature from William Paley's Lockean natural theology, which aimed to show concrete evidence of a Divine Watchmaker by indicating complexity and purpose in natural phenomena.[185] For Coleridge, Paley's 'divine fingerprint' in nature only presents *natura naturata*. However, it is precisely from *natura naturata* that the Idea, *a fortiori* the divine Idea, must transcend, rather than be immanently and empirically evident in its appearances. For Coleridge, the appearance of a rainbow, or the space remarkably left in the chrysalis for the unformed butterfly's wings (*Biographia* I, 242), with all other appearances of nature do not count as evidence of divinity.

The symbolic aspect of phenomena is the work of the primary imagination, which may be taken up by the conscious poetry of the secondary imagination. Both transform disparate appearances into the unity of a deeper meaning. This work conveys the universal in the particular, providing a sense of something more than, but not other than, what is immediate in appearance. To take a prosaic example, a falling apple conveys a sense of the gravity with which the event is consubstantial. Gravitation is therefore

[185] Coleridge had previously directed his anti-utilitarian critique at Paley's ethics and theology, which 'reduced', he argues, 'all virtue to a selfish prudence' (*Friend* I, 108). Hedley (2000, 136) notes Paley's 'clearly literalist and forensic approach to Scripture . . . as a quarry for particular tenets or facts.'

more than, but not other than, the phenomena that symbolize it in Coleridge's consubstantial, participatory sense of the symbol.

iii. Dejection: an Ode

While 'Frost at Midnight' overcomes fancy's idle attractions to move through meditation and begin contemplation, 'Dejection' – also set at midnight – does not move beyond meditation. Grappling those 'viper thoughts, that coil round my mind', thought's progress stops short of contemplation. While the frost in 'Frost at Midnight' performs its ministry 'unhelped by any wind', and the breeze in 'Eolian Harp' lulls with pleasant notes to fancy's tune, in 'Dejection' 'the wind, which long has raved unnoticed' becomes 'as scream of agony by torture lengthened out / That lute sent forth!' Although not achieving contemplation, this poem is a highly poetic sustained meditation on – ironic to consider – fearing the loss of poetic sensibility. Following Coleridge's sustained meditation on mood, I will find comparisons with Kant and Heidegger.

Although beauty is *seen*, it is described as not being *felt* in the poem, its absence occasions a meditation on what is required for beauty to be fully revealed, not only intellectually but aesthetically. Elsewhere, Coleridge laments 'the despotism of the eye', which phrase implicitly involves the false definites of fancy and conceptual understanding, and he privileges hearing and touch as more inward, meditative senses. Coleridge laments he can 'see, not feel' the beauty of the western sky, with crescent moon below thin clouds 'That give away their motion to the stars.' The poem thus meditates on beauty and aesthetic response, or its lack, despite intellectual recognition. Although the poet intellectually evaluates the scene's beauty, he begins the poem unable to feel it in any satisfactorily deep and consoling sense.[186] In contrast to the breeze brought pleasant music in 'Eolian Harp's idle musing, the wind, in 'Dejection', becomes,

> The dull sobbing draft that moans and rakes
> Upon the strings of this Eolian lute,
> Which better far were mute.

[186] This is not to say that satisfaction was the goal, but rather that the lack of a feeling correspondent to the intellectually discerned beauty indicates, at least in the poet's conscience, a culpable incompleteness, a want of profounder, resonant gratitude, and a prayer for grace.

Coleridge indicates a gap between intellectual recognition and aesthetic response, adding a level of depth and complexity missing from Kant's criterion of disinterestedness in the moment of aesthetic appreciation. In this poem, it seems that Coleridge finds reason to distance himself from Kant's criterion that the subject must be detached from sensual interest in the object of genuine aesthetic experience. For Coleridge, aesthetic appreciation must involve the whole mind, and not only, transcendental though this is, the intellectual appreciation of beauty, and thence of the moral value it intimates.

In aesthetic appreciation, for Coleridge, we read our wider situation. A comparison can be made here with Heidegger, who proposes that we best discover our 'situatedness' (*Befindlichkeit*) in the qualitative import of mood and attunement. In aesthetic experience, insofar as it refers to the Ideas of reason, our situation is revealed from the vantage of higher purposes. Aesthetic Ideas thus interpreted relate beauty, the sublime, and the morally good, but also situational transcendentals, such as in Kant's examples of 'death, envy, love, and so forth', and Heidegger's examples of Being-with, Being-towards-death, and resoluteness.

These examples open up a world of situated meanings that 'strain after something . . . beyond the confines of experience' (*CJ,* §49). In 'Dejection', the poet's mood is explored, revealing 'Reality's dark dream'. In this frame, beauties can be recognized, but only blankly, with no consoling aesthetic response. Thus when the poet sees, but does not feel, the beauty of the western sky, he is in the position of Hamlet, wherein 'it goes so heavily / with my disposition that this goodly frame, the / Earth, seems to me a sterile promontory'.

Recalling Kant's genius, or *Geist*, in the phrase 'genial spirits', Coleridge, in 'Dejection', complains that, 'My genial spirits fail'. His 'genial spirits' comprise the genius of the poetic shaper of aesthetic Ideas who, if these fail, can no longer feel the value that exceeds the understanding. Dejected, everything before the eye deflates into empirical concepts, as if the air of feeling were removed through puncture, and beauty becomes an empty category intellectually 'seen' but not aesthetically felt. Nevertheless, intellectual appreciation brings awareness of a lack, and that one ought to feel the overflow of Idea and its resonance beyond the concept's ken.

Truly to feel beauty, rather than just to see it intellectually, requires the activity of the whole mind. Only to conceptually recognize the beauty is to apply of rules of judgment, such as purposiveness without purpose. But just as the poet involves the

whole mind in acts of creativity, every experiencing individual is poetizing, in a primary imagination sense, when they open themselves to be fully touched in the experience of beauty. Hence the poet can declare,

> O Lady! We receive but what we give,
> And in our life alone does Nature live:
> Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!

Receiving what we give is no mere projection, but one that acknowledges resonance and reverberation. Sartre shows,

> the error which we would make by believing that we 'project' our affective dispositions on the thing, to illuminate or colour it. First, . . . a feeling is not an inner disposition, but an objective, transcending relation which has as its object to learn what it is. But this is not all. The explanation by projection, which is found in such trite sayings as "A landscape is a spiritual state", always begs the question. (Sartre, [1943] 1996, Part Four, Ch. Two, III)

For Sartre, to explain a landscape as being a spiritual state is a petitio principii in presuming that we explicitly know what a spiritual state is. The relation between feelings and surroundings is an area of experience that raises some very delicate questions. Sartre consummately discerns that feelings are not inner dispositions but transcending, self-relating relations. Coleridge, exploring how feelings are ways of knowing, adumbrates him in pursuing how feelings reveal value in the world, self, and others. In the year after he composes 'Dejection', Coleridge writes:

> O there are Truths below the surface in the subject of Sympathy, & how we *become* that which we understandingly behold & hear, having, how much perhaps God only knows, created part even of the Form. (*Notebooks* 2, 2806)

Aesthetic Ideas are no mere projections. Imagination must discern aesthetic Ideas in nature in order to appreciate nature symbolically, and not allegorically. Using nature allegorically would be to map our human concerns onto it, whereas symbolic relation finds mutual energies, discerning the scene as nature naturing, rather than as 'that inanimate cold world' which, perceived only as *natura naturata*, is insufficient to invite an active response from 'the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd.' The poet's self-prescribed remedy, then, is that:

> Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
> A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
> Enveloping the Earth—
> And from the soul itself must there be sent
> A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
> Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

Coleridge is not anticipating Ruskin's (1856, vol. III, pt 4) pathetic fallacy, which projects thought and emotion onto inanimate nature. In saying 'we receive but what we give, / And in our life alone does Nature live' he encourages the hearer to experience more actively. He is not advocating a relativistic, personifying projection that uses nature to amplify one's self. In order to receive symbolic import from natural forms, we must engage the imagination in symbolically relating it to Ideas. This connection with concept-exceeding Ideas adds the shimmer of beauty and transcendent meaning to appearance taken symbolically. This transcendent meaning is not a propositional sequence, which would lead to antinomies of reason, but is rather a deepening and beholding of values and resonances. It is an aesthetic, not an epistemological, response.

Remember that for Coleridge, to take nature, or anything for that matter, symbolically is to eschew allegory, which represents something different from itself by becoming burdened with another meaning. Coleridge himself writes allegorical poems, but stresses that only the symbol, and not allegory or metaphor, expresses transcendence. Allegory restates with pictorial language, but it parallels, unlike symbols, which go beyond, providing a gradient from the lower to the higher. That is to say, allegory restates, using a new image placed adjacently to the first and on the same level as it, whereas symbol indicates a transcendence, moving beyond the original image or meaning. Thus, as W. B. Yeats conveys in explicitly Coleridgean terms,

> A symbol is indeed the only possible expression of some invisible essence, a transparent lamp about a spiritual flame; while allegory is one of many possible representations of an embodied thing, and belongs to fancy and not to imagination (Yeats, [1924] 2007, 88)

The Coleridgean symbol is consubstantial with what it symbolizes. A crashing wave might symbolize nature's power, or power in general, or, imagined in another direction, it could symbolize dissipation. Consubstantial with what it symbolizes, the symbol does not represent, as a stand-in, something different, separate and apart from itself.[187] The wave itself has power, which it represents. The wave also dissipates, while simultaneously representing dissipation. How appearances are to be symbolically interpreted is imagination's creative task, and it is in the sense of this creative discovery that 'We receive but what we give' and '*become* that which we understandingly behold and hear.'

[187] I suspect a solution to the Platonic *chôrismos* problem exists through Coleridgean symbol, itself a Neo-Platonic device.

Imagination's symbolic interpretation is indeed a task, and is not in free play to generate any meanings without restriction, as would be the case for fancy. Twelve years after composing 'Dejection', Coleridge writes that he faintly represents a passage from Plotinus (I.6.3, 'On the Beautiful') with his stanzas 4 and 5 (ll. 47-75), i.e. from 'O Lady! We receive but what we give,' to 'All colours a suffusion from that light!' Here is the passage, which Coleridge quotes in Greek, and which Taylor renders as:

> When therefore sense [*aisthesis*] beholds the form [*eidos*] in bodies [*somata*] at strife with matter (*phusios*), binding and vanquishing its contrary nature, and sees form gracefully shining forth in other forms, it collects together the scattered whole, and introduces it to itself, and to the invisible form within; and renders it consonant, congruous and friendly to its own intimate form. (*SWF*, Principles of Genial Criticism, Coleridge's fn.)

Plotinus says here that sense beholds Form in bodies (which we can take to be natural forms, living bodies, and artworks); that Form and matter are contraries; and that when Form thoroughly orders a body, it gracefully shines through the matter (foreshadowing the Romantic notion of the symbol being a translucence whereby Idea is aesthetically conveyed). Form thoroughly ordering a body could be Justice in a law of state; virtue in a human being; ratio in a building or proportion in music, etc. Form, then, *collects together*, we might say internally *organizes*, the body, such that all parts and motions synergize to a unitary and Ideal end.

This intellectually beautiful unity is similar to a person being calm and *collected* due to a self-possession coming from the mind's eye fixing on a higher principle[188] that unifies feelings, aims, and actions and safeguards against scattering diversions. The process Plotinus describes is self-reflective as the Form introduces the beautiful body to itself and to the indivisible Form within, rendering the whole body self-intimate and consonant within its ordering Form. Previously, this matter resisted the Form, as marble resists the sculptor, yet now vanquished by the Form its dignity is elevated, not debased in the defeat, because being ruled by Form provides an ordination into greater meaning and participation, rather than demeaning subordination.

Coleridge, poetizing this process, proposes that to fully appreciate natural beauty, one must appreciate the Laws behind the phenomena. These Laws, or Ideas, give the Form, and the phenomena are their signs and results. Thus the experiencing mind more fully open to aesthetic experience will not passively receive phenomena as an Aeolian harp receives the breeze, responding mechanically. Rather, the phenomena will be

[188] Cf. *Republic*, 592a.

interpreted as aesthetic Ideas, symbolizing nature naturing. This interpretative process involves admitting the inadequacy of the concepts of the understanding, then deferring to the Ideas of reason. Thus people are responsible for their own aesthetic sensitivities, insofar as they are conceived not only as passions, but also as actions bringing with them their own rewards.

iv. This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison

> Charles Lamb has been with me for a week—he left me Friday morning.— / The second day after Wordsworth came to me, dear Sara accidently emptied a skillet of boiling milk on my foot, which confined me during the whole time of C. Lamb's stay & still prevents me from all walks longer than a furlong.— While Wordsworth, his Sister, & C. Lamb were out one evening; / sitting in the arbour of T. Poole's garden, which communicates with mine, I wrote these lines, with which I am pleased— (*Letters* I, 334, July (?) 1797)

In 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison', the poet is forced – due to his foot's being scalded by boiling milk in a domestic accident, or so he says – to wait while his friends continue a walk that he has enjoyed many times. This Conversation Poem addresses itself to Charles Lamb, fellow poet and old school-friend from Christ's Hospital days. Lamb is up from London and in dark spirits, sorely needing this Lakeland walk.

Coleridge does not mention what caused Lamb's deep grief, namely that his sister slew their mother in a fit of lunacy, as the court termed it. He does, however, describe Lamb's need for natural vistas as he:

> . . . hast pined
> And hunger'd after Nature, many a year,
> In the great City pent, winning thy way
> With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
> And strange calamity!

Sympathy for his friend is underscored in the phrase describing Lamb in London - as bing 'in the great City pent' – the very words Coleridge uses in 'Frost at Midnight' to relate his own London schooldays. Reusing this phrase highlights Coleridge's fraternal feeling toward Lamb, recalling their days together 'pent mid cloisters dim'.

The poem begins in a state of gentle-heartedly exaggerated self-pity. As in 'Dejection', 'This Lime-Tree' bemoans the loss of aesthetic joys: 'I have lost / Beauties and feelings, such as would have been / Most sweet to my remembrance even when age / Had dimm'd mine eyes to Blindness!' However, in 'This Lime-Tree' he regrets being *physically forced* to forgo the pleasures of a walk with friends, while the later poem,

‘Dejection’, is a sublimely poetic description of a *psychological barrier* to experiencing beauty in its fullness.

The lime tree he calls his prison, though it really provides a resting place as he exaggerates, poking fun at himself, that he ‘never more may meet again’ his friends, though they have only gone for an afternoon walk. Sympathy for his friend, and the expectation that the walk, familiar to him but new to Lamb, will make his friend ‘most glad’. He then overcomes self-pity, and imagines the walk and its effect on his comrade. Thus he imagines Lamb:

> Struck with deep joy

such that he may stand:

> . . . as I have stood,
> Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
> On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
> Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
> As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
> Spirits perceive his presence.

These are the lines that Coleridge sends Thelwell, as mentioned above, in the discussion of meditative states in ‘The Eolian Harp’, lines that he says represent those rare times when he stands:

> Struck with the deepest calm of Joy (*Letters* I, 209)

and can thus, though seldom, ‘raise and spiritualize my intellect’. More common meditative periods are a poorer second best, which latter he inaccurately describes, in the same letter, as adopting the Brahman Creed – sitting or lying in a soporific state.
What is important here, concerning meditative states, is Coleridge’s pointing out the intellectual and spiritual superiority of a state that is very sensuously aware, yet utterly calm, rather than in any way excited. Instead of excitement, the relation to perceived beauty and to life becomes deep, calm joy. Coleridge is careful to distinguish this joyful calm from the dreamy tranquillity he ill-advisedly associates with Brahmanism, and we can see that the superior state is much more energized. Thus we can say this deep, calm joy is an energized state of heightened awareness that is keenly attentive to the surroundings without being excited by desires of material appropriation.

With sympathy for his friend, his situation turns from self-pity at missing out on shared enjoyment, to a deeper sharing, beyond first-hand witness, of deep joy contemplated. An act of will, involving the whole, active mind, its memory,

expectation, anticipation, sympathy, and aesthetic openness, creates a meaningful shared experience from a separation that, perceived passively, invokes self-pity. His perception changes with a voluntary, poetic act of imagination, presenting a sublimely beautiful wide landscape that invites a meditative response 'Silent with swimming sense; yea gazing round.' Once he has overcome his self-pity at shared pleasures missed, he is free to appreciate the less spectacular, yet no less impressive, beauties of the modest forms surrounding his bower. Blessing a rook beating its path above him, soon perhaps to fly near his friend, he can appreciate that,

> No sound is dissonant which tells of Life.

And thus the poem returns upon itself, to where it started, but now, like 'Frost at Midnight', and other of Coleridge's Meditative Poems, with broader perspective that approaches contemplation *sub specie aeternitatis*. In the rounding return, egotism is overcome, consideration is elevated, and the poet acknowledges, where at first he belittled, the soothing consolations offered by his humble spot by the bower. Thus the third and last stanza begins the return of the widened gyre to initial point of departure, humbled like a returning prodigal son:

> A delight
> Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
> As I myself were there! Nor in this bower,
> This little lime-tree bower, have I not mark'd
> Much that has sooth'd me. . . .

Gérard (1967) identifies certain of Coleridge's Meditative Poems, including 'Frost' and 'Lime-Tree', as having a systolic-diastolic rhythm. This is a fitting expression in that it provides an image of the expanding and contracting movements in these poems and relates it to the heart's vitality. Nevertheless, the rhythmic circling and returning, opening and beholding movement and then stilling of thought in these poems is far slower than any heartbeat. Of this circularity in 'Frost', Coleridge says, 'Poems of this kind & length ought to lie coiled with its tail round its head' (*Poetical Works* I.1, 456),[189] suggesting the serpentine image of the ouroboros, or even, befitting the domesticity of these poems, but not their subdued grandeur, fried whiting.

In this expanding-contracting, opening and beholding, what begins in the mind as local and particular concerns initially carried here and there by fancy becomes part of an enlightened vision that begins in the stillness of recognizing the mind's infusion by

[189] Originally in Coleridge's annotated 'Frost at Midnight' in Beaumont's copy of the MS.

Ideas. These Meditative Poems, and other Coleridgean observations, thus express and embody contemplative, poetic vision. The sleeping babe in humble cot, the rook beating over a Lime-Tree, the moon dim-glimmering through dewy window pane, smoke curling from an ember,[190] and many images like this in the Notebooks, though humble and domestic, are all participants in the symbolic sublime.[191]

[190] An image of sublimity and grandeur, when seeing even small things in the appropriate frame, in the poem 'Apologia pro vita sua' (Poetical Works I).
[191] Littleness does not prevent insights into the sublime for Coleridge, as he demonstrates in 'Frost', 'Lime-Tree', 'Apologia', and many other poems, letters, and Notebook entries. He therefore cautions against mistaking 'Bigness for Greatness (*Notebooks* II, 3157). Elsewhere he remarks that Milton 'never passes off bigness for greatness . . . as the poets of India do' (*Opus Maximum*, 281).

Appendix C: Poems

Coleridge often revised his major poems, sometimes after intervals of many years. The versions used below follow the selections made by J. C. C. Mays in his two-volume edition (the current standard) of *Poems (Reading Text)*, other versions can be found in Mays's third volume, *Poems (Varioria)*, and in Coleridge's original volumes and collected works.

The Eolian Harp: Composed at Clevedon, Somersetshire
[Aug-Oct 1795; also Feb? 1796]

My pensive Sara! thy soft cheek reclined
Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our cot, our cot o'ergrown
With white-flowered Jasmin, and the broad-leaved Myrtle,
(Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!)
And watch the clouds, that late were rich with light,
Slow saddening round, and mark the star of eve
Serenely brilliant (such would Wisdom be)
Shine opposite! How exquisite the scents
Snatched from yon bean-field! and the world so hushed!
The stilly murmur of the distant Sea
Tells us of Silence.

And that simplest Lute,
Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
How by the desultory breeze caressed,
Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs
Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
Boldlier swept, the long sequacious* notes
Over delicious surges sink and rise,
Such a soft floating witchery of sound
As twilight Elfins make, when they at eve
Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land,
Where Melodies round honey-dropping flowers,
Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,
Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untamed wing!
O! the one Life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where—
Methinks, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so filled;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air,
Is Music slumbering on her instrument.

* sequacious = lacking original thought [Coleridge's note].

And thus, my Love! as on the midway slope
Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,
Whilst through my half-closed eyelids I behold
The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main,
And tranquil muse upon tranquility:
Full many a thought uncalled and undetained,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
As wild and various as the random gales
That swell and flutter on this subject lute!

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of All?

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
Darts, O beloved Woman! nor such thoughts
Dim and unhallowed dost thou not reject,
And biddest me walk humbly with my God.
Meek daughter in the family of Christ!
Well hast thou said and holily dispraised
These shapings of the unregenerate mind;
Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring.
For never guiltless may I speak of him,
The Incomprehensible! save when with awe
I praise him, and with Faith that inly feels;
Who with his saving mercies healed me,
A sinful and most miserable Man,
Wildered and dark, and gave me to possess
Peace, and this Cot, and thee, heart-honoured Maid!

Dejection: an Ode
[July 1802?]

Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,
With the old Moon in her arms;
And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!
We shall have a deadly storm.
Ballad of Sir PATRICK SPENCE

I.

Well! If the Bard was weather-wise, who made
The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unrous'd by winds, that ply a busier trade
Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes,
Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes

Upon the strings of this Æolian lute,
Which better far were mute.
For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
And overspread with phantom light,
(With swimming phantom light o'erspread
But rimm'd and circled by a silver thread)
I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming-on of rain and squally blast.
And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

II.

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear—
O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood,
To other thoughts by yonder throstle* woo'd,
All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
Have I been gazing on the western sky,
And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
Yon crescent Moon, as fix'd as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

III.

My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail,
To lift the smoth'ring weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavor,
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

IV.

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:

* throstle = song thrush [Coleridge's note].

Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allow'd
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

V.

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be!
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.
Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Life, and Life's Effluence, Cloud at once and Shower,
Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dow'r
A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—
We in ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light.

VI.

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seem'd mine.
But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
But oh! each visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
My shaping spirit of Imagination.
For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient, all I can;
And haply by abstruse research to steal
From my own nature all the natural man—
This was my sole resource, my only plan:
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.

VII.

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
Reality's dark dream!
I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
Which long has rav'd unnoticed. What a scream
Of agony by torture lengthen'd out
That lute sent forth! Thou Wind, that rav'st without,
Bare crag, or mountain-tairn,* or blasted tree,
Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,
Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
Mad Lutanist! who in this month of show'rs,
Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flow'rs,
Mak'st Devils' yule, with worse than wint'ry song,
The blossoms, buds, and tim'rous leaves among.
Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold!
What tell'st thou now about?
'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,
With groans, of trampled men, with smarting wounds—
At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!
But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!
And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
With groans, and tremulous shudderings—all is over—
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
A tale of less affright,
And tempered with delight,
As Otway's self had framed the tender lay—
'Tis of a little child
Upon a lonesome wild,
Nor far from home, but she hath lost her way:
And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.

VIII.

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:
Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,
And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,
May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!
With light heart may she rise,
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
To her may all things live, from Pole to Pole,
Their life the eddying of her living soul!
O simple spirit, guided from above,

* tairn = small lake

Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,
Thus may'st thou ever, evermore rejoice.

This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison

[Addressed to Charles Lamb, of the India House, London, July 1797]

Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
This Lime-Tree Bower my prison! I have lost
Beauties and Feelings, such as would have been
Most sweet to my remembrance even when age
Had dimm'd mine eyes to blindness! They, meanwhile,
Friends, whom I never more may meet again,
On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,
Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,
To that still roaring dell, of which I told;
The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
And only speckled by the mid-day Sun;
Where its slim trunk the Ash from rock to rock
Flings arching like a bridge;—that branchless Ash,
Unsunn'd and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
Fann'd by the water-fall! and there my friends
Behold the dark green file of long lank Weeds,
That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
Of the blue clay-stone.

Now, my friends emerge
Beneath the wide wide Heaven—and view again
The many-steepled tract magnificent
Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
With some fair bark, perhaps, whose Sails light up
The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two Isles
Of purple shadow! Yes! they wander on
In gladness all; but thou, methinks, most glad,
My gentle-hearted Charles! for thou hast pined
And hunger'd after Nature, many a year,
In the great City pent, winning thy way
With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
And strange calamity! Ah! slowly sink
Behind the western ridge, thou glorious Sun!
Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
Ye purple heath-flowers! richlier burn, ye clouds!
Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!
And kindle, thou blue Ocean! So my Friend
Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem

Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
Spirits perceive his presence.

A delight
Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
As I myself were there! Nor in this bower,
This little lime-tree bower, have I not mark'd
Much that has sooth'd me. Pale beneath the blaze
Hung the transparent foliage; and I watch'd
Some broad and sunny leaf, and lov'd to see
The shadow of the leaf and stem above
Dappling its sunshine! And that Walnut-tree
Was richly ting'd, and a deep radiance lay
Full on the ancient Ivy, which usurps
Those fronting elms, and now, with blackest mass
Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
Through the late twilight: and though now the Bat
Wheels silent by, and not a Swallow twitters,
Yet still the solitary humble Bee
Sings in the bean-flower! Henceforth I shall know
That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
No Plot so narrow, be but Nature there,
No waste so vacant, but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to Love and Beauty! and sometimes
'Tis well to be bereft of promis'd good,
That we may lift the Soul, and contemplate
With lively joy the joys we cannot share.
My gentle-hearted Charles! when the last Rook
Beat its straight path along the dusky air
Homewards, I blest it! deeming its black wing
(Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light)
Had cross'd the mighty Orb's dilated glory,
While thou stood'st gazing; or, when all was still,
Flew creeking o'er thy head, and had a charm
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom
No Sound is dissonant which tells of Life.

Frost at Midnight
[Feb 1798]

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.

’Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

But O! how oft,
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch that fluttering *stranger*![*] and as of
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
Whose bells, the poor man’s only music, rang
From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt,
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!
And so I brooded all the following morn,
Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
For still I hoped to see the *stranger’s* face,
Townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike!

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersed vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought!
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,
And in far other scenes! For I was reared

[*] stranger = sooty film, auguring a visitor [Coleridge’s note]

In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
But *thou*, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
Great universal Teacher! he shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.